Differentiation, polarisation and confrontation in rural Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This is a study on the processes of differentiation, polarization and confrontation in a specific peasant society. Two villages of Bangladesh formed the setting. The differentiation process is the outcome of the development of capitalism in the rural areas. But capitalism, in the Bangladesh context, has a double colonial background: the British and the Pakistani colonial periods. Both in varying degrees hastened and regressed the development of capitalism, shaping development in the colonial context and influencing the process of capital accumulation in the rural areas. Again, capital accumulation is structured within a precise mode of production and the political and economic nature of the state specify the dimension and the structure of the mode: colonial, petit mode of production geared for industrialization. In this fashion, class structure emerges in the village and as a social stratum, it reacts in a different way within the national capitalist development. Since capitalist development is uneven due to the colonial background, it produces two interlinked but contradictory effects. Firstly, it generates class differentiation within the peasantry and shapes the polarization process. Secondly, it determines the placement of both the peasant classes within the structure of society and of agriculture within the national economy. This placement is significant, because it effects the class struggle: confrontation. Thus the village is differentiated, and the various classes are structurally aligned both on the rural and on the national terrain. With the emergence of class come the various dimensions of social life: economic, political and ideological factors intersect. Within the field of differentiation, class conjoins the actions of different structures. Class is an effect of the structures and class practices reveal the relations of opposition. Thus in a social formation, various alignments depend on the control of and access to the mode of production. While the rich peasants compete for control of the structure, their competition takes factional shape. When others challenge the structure, the challenge becomes class struggle. Whereas the rural rich are structurally aligned with the national bureaucracy and the dominant political parties, the poor peasants are organized locally by the underground Left. They challenge the existing national power structure from a class position, from a local base. This local challenge characterizes the class struggle and pinpoints its fragmentary nature. This study, therefore, is about the differentiation process in a specific context and an examination of how the differentiation process expands the potential area of tension and dissatisfaction, thus shaping the forms and intensity of confrontation.

Differentiation, Polarisation and Confrontation in Rural Bangladesh

By

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PREFACE

This work was carried out within the Anthropology Department of Durham University. Over three years, Dr. Norman Long, my supervisor, gently shaped my thinking on the differentiation process. And I benefitted greatly from his insight. He helped me to order my thoughts and to sharpen my analysis. I am grateful to him. I am also grateful to Professor Eric Sunderland for his kindness.

I recall here in gratitude the people of Mirabo and Nayapara for their support and assistance in a time of political violence, flood and famine.

Because of the prevailing uncertain situation, despite my efforts, I could not collect data regarding peasants household budget. I concentrated my fieldwork in Mirabo and Nayapara and made brief enquiries of the surrounding villages. These are the main first-hand sources I used. The other main source is the national censuses. I sometimes phrased my argument as if it applies to rural Bangladesh in general, but usually in terms of the two villages I studied.

It is needless to say that I used pseudo-names for the villages and for the people.

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

Contemporary Situation in Bangladesh

The material for this study was collected in Dacca district, Bangladesh, in 1974-75. The period was one of political unrest, acute food shortage, flood and famine.

In the three years after liberation from Pakistan, five members of Parliament were assassinated and three thousand party workers killed (Jahan, 1976). Many MPs fled from their home towns and took up temporary residence in Dacca for safety. The price index went up by 300 percent; and in response to this deteriorating situation the government undertook to supply food rations in urban areas at lower prices than those on the open market in the rural areas. The government also allowed the free sale of rice to continue in the statutory rationed areas, and this led to hoarding and the spiralling of prices. Then came the devastating floods which damaged the crops and famine set in. In the village where I stayed kerosene was unavailable. Salt was a luxury item, food became more and more scarce and for many, land had to be sold or mortgaged to secure the basic means of survival. Some left the village, but many clung to the land and death started taking its toll. Hunger and death became a daily phenomenon. In this manner, the village suffered the cross-currents of the national economic and political forces. Bangladesh peasant society felt the impact of disequilibrium generated by an unstable economic and political situation. The impact was felt on various structures - economic, political, ideological and kin-

ship - and simultaneously, the effects of various structures were felt on each other (Godelier, 1972, pp. 263-279; 1975, pp. 3-23). What happens to a peasant society when it is rocked by political unrest, famine and floods? Who protects whom? How do loyalties take shape? And how do they affect the formation of social class in rural Bangladesh?

In the present-day economic structure of Bangladesh, the peasants' control over land is unequal. Land has become a commodity. Some peasants are rich; many are poor. While rich peasants concentrate on commercial crops, poor peasants are concerned with food crops. Agricultural surpluses are sold in the market. This surplus is generated from the production process. Capital accumulates. Some part of it is invested outside agriculture. Urban investors also put capital into agriculture. The village is part of the process of capital accumulation.

In the political structure, some peasants take part in local government and in the activities of the dominant political parties. They use the political structure to maintain their position in the economic structure. Others form peasant associations and are linked with the underground Left-wing parties. Rich peasants manipulate bargaining power, but so also do poor peasants. The situation generates challenge and confrontation. Political networks of diverse kinds link the individual peasant with opposing political loyalties.

There are two conflicting traditions in Bangladesh peasant society: a tradition of participation and a tradition of patronage. The

village people participate on an equal basis as members of a Samaj (little community). Though the Samaj is based ideologically on the concept of social equality, a structure of dominance gradually emerges within it from the unevenly developed bases of other social structures: from the economic and political structures. These shape the relations between rich and poor peasants and are sometimes framed in terms of a 'patronage' idiom. The social position of the patron is based on landholding and on his political linkage. Thus the tradition of patronage reveals the dominating social position of the patron and the dominated social position of the client. This tradition is based on economic dependence (Alavi, 1973) and binds the landless and the poor peasant to the rich peasant. In this way participation on an equal basis in the Samaj shrinks, and the gradual emergence of a structure of dominance governs behaviour and affects normative judgements. This 'enforced' dependency relationship appears as one based on mutual help and reciprocity and the rich peasant thinks of himself as a murubbi (protector, patron). However, this paternalistic view of patronage is eroding at present because of the growth of peasants' political action. In opposition to the paternalistic view, the peasants consider that the relationship is based on exploitation and domination.

On another level, in kinship, we also find ideological equality and institutional inequality. Genealogy and inheritance are two aspects of kinship and in this peasant society they are combined to produce two different forms of social relations. While genealogical connection

produces the framework for relations between specific kin categories, inheritance as such generates property relations. Here, inheritance is individual, not corporate, and at the same time a source of potential inequality. A person may be equal to another in terms of his kinship position, but may be unequal in relation to the control of property, since the property relation, in the end, produces distance between the subunits of the genealogical tree. Thus kinship structures or genealogies are not the sole focus for institutionalization (Terray, 1975; Bloch, 1975): relationships here are structured in various ways. A variety of institutions emerge in the economic, political and kinship areas; and they shape the multiplicity of ties between persons. Some ties are based on reciprocity and equality as in Samaj or in kinship; others are based on unequal relationships as in land or property relations. These diverse ties arise out of various structures - economic, political, kinship - and affect peasant modes of action and behaviour.

Peasant Studies in the Indian sub-continent

Peasant studies in the Indian sub-continent have mainly concentrated on the caste system and the modernization process. Bailey (1959, 1960, 1963) studied the hill peasants of Orissa. They are tribal people, caste-ridden; and they look at the social world in terms of categories of social rank. They are involved in a process of development and the promoters of economic, social and political development are outsiders. Bailey presents the model of encapsulation based upon the

analysis of village social structure and the wider political process in Orissa State, India. He contrasted the diffuse, undifferentiated structure of social relations at the village level with the structure of social interaction existing at other levels elsewhere in the society. The process of modernisation is expressed as the blurring of this distinction. While Bailey concentrated on the encapsulation process, Epstein (1962) looked at the impact of technological innovations in two villages in Mysore, in South India. She examined in depth the way in which individuals exploited the new resources and the subsequent tensions produced in a caste-based society. She emphasized that social changes occur not because of generalised changes in values but as responses to specific situations. As the outcome of one situation affects, ultimately others, each case must be examined individually. Hers is a stimulus-response model of change, where the modernising elite both sets the goals and evaluates the extent of their achievement.

Beteille (1971) studied the phenomenon of caste, class and power in a South Indian village and related them to the broader phenomenon of social stratification. In the village he studied, land became a commodity and this process led to a change in the relationship between caste and the agrarian hierarchy. The population of the village was divided, first into Brahmins, Non-Brahmins and Adi-Dravidas and, then, on a different basis, into land-owners, tenants and agricultural labourers. Beteille analysed changes in the relations between these two systems.

Alavi (1972, 1973) investigated politics in the Punjab villages of Pakistan and the peasant mode of political action. He analysed the economic structure and the pattern of alignments within it, and found that they are determined primarily by the distribution of ownership of land and the mode of its utilisation.

Bertocci (1970) examined two villages of pre-liberation Bangladesh, mainly emphasising social structure and community organization. He discussed the social and political significance of possession of land. Though the size of landholding is narrow in Bangladesh in comparison with Punjab' yet ownership of land constitutes an important variable in the determination of a family's status. Smallness in farm size does not minimise the importance of small differences in landownership and associated economic activities. He attributed a great deal of fluidity to the system in which different families rise to power as rich peasants but are unable to maintain superior wealth for a long period of time because of the vicissitudes of agriculture in a monsoon climate and because of the existing system of multiple inheritance. He describes this process as 'cyclical kulakism', where 'there appears to occur a regular rise and fall of families, the decline of wealth (and hence a key basis for power) for some and the increase of these for others' (Bertocci, 1972, p.48).

Peasant society in Bangladesh, however, is not a tribal community (Bailey). Nor is it caste-ridden (Epstein, Beteille). Nor is land concentrated in few hands (Alavi). Nor is it caught in a circular mobility

as stated by Bertocci. The crux of the problem concerns the formation of capital in a colonial agrarian situation. This formation of capital produces differentiation of the peasantry within a capitalist framework. This framework is defined by two colonial impositions: the British and the Pakistani colonial periods. Capitalism, in the first colonial setting, during the British period, penetrated pre-capitalist social formations and utilised them as levers for introducing new social forms, such as commodity production and centralised state control. In this way, rural structures became part of a capitalist structure which nevertheless maintained certain non-capitalist forms of exploitation. In the second setting, during the Pakistani period, the colonised peasantry was linked to a world market via a developing national capitalist system. In both colonial periods, capital accumulation in the rural areas affected the pattern of land ownership and distribution, shaped the pattern of politics and the agrarian power structure. In the post-liberation period, this process of capital formation led to a situation in which the economic viability of poor households and a section of the middle peasantry was seriously undermined, whilst the rich peasants stabilised their position.

In the colonial periods, the scarce and static resources, the low level of productivity and the system of inheritance affected the affluence of particular families. Capital accumulation was stifled. But in the post-colonial context of Bangladesh, new opportunities for increasing

agricultural productivity and a greater scope for investment in non-agricultural activity lead to a greater concentration of land. This has strengthened the development of a stable, rich peasant class. These rich peasants impose class domination in the rural areas and extend class alliance into the towns and centres of administration. In the changed situation, the subsistence households tend to disintegrate in the face of the market economy, become more fragmented due to inheritance problems and to natural disasters. But these processes least affect the rich peasants; in fact, they are able to take advantage of the market economy and of natural disaster, and to seek new alliances in the towns and administration. As they have branched out into non-agricultural activities and have enhanced their capacity to establish sons in other forms of employment, so have their inherited land-holdings in most cases remained intact. This process of class differentiation, stimulated by new opportunities for the accumulation of capital, results in polarisation in the rural areas. Thus a stable, rich peasant class (within a national, economic and political frame) confronts the small and poor peasants. This represents a fundamental change in the mode of production in which vertical relationships of interdependence give way to polarisation and structural antagonism.

Thus the crucial question faced in this study is this: how do capitalist relations emerge in a colonial agricultural society like Bangladesh and transform the pre-capitalist modes of production? And how do capitalist

relations in a post-colonial setting simultaneously reinforce the internal differentiation in such a peasant society encapsulated economically and politically within the state?

The Process of Capitalist Penetration in Agrarian Societies

Marx (in Grundrises, 1973, p.471) analysed the historical pre-conditions for the rise of capital in agrarian societies. He also analysed a variety of agrarian societies of different structural forms with reference to the transition from feudalism to capitalism (1969, vol.111, ch.XLVII). Following Marx, Kautsky, in the Agrarian Question (1976), examined the problem of agriculture in capitalist social formations. He raised two questions: why does the development of capitalism in agriculture take a different form than in industry? And why does the dominant capitalist mode of production co-exist with pre-capitalist social relations of production? Kautsky focussed on the development of the productive forces and relations of production in agriculture within the framework of capitalism. Capitalism, according to him, produces differentiation within the peasantry. But he also emphasised that this differentiation does not always escalate rapidly and sometimes does not appear clearly at all. The reasons for this contra-tendency are: 1. inheritance in agriculture limits the propensity towards property concentration; 2. mechanisation in some branches of agriculture is not possible and therefore does not produce minute social division of labour; 3. unlike industrial enterprise,

large farms have certain problems of supervising rural labour; 4. as agricultural work is seasonal, large farms can ensure a labour force through recruiting small-holders who work as wage labourers for a part of the year; 5. the peasants will often till a tiny plot of land even if they receive a meagre income from its produce in comparison with existing wage levels; and 6. the exploitation of the rural area by the towns removes part of the surplus, thus limiting the formation of capital in agriculture (Sorj, 1976).

While Kautsky treated the problem of agriculture with respect to advanced capitalist countries, Lenin (1974) dealt with a social formation in an earlier stage of capitalist development. Lenin formed a "model" based on a Marxist analysis of class relations in rural societies. He regarded agriculture as part of the operation of the economic laws of the capitalist system, especially the laws of capital accumulation. He also recognised the special place of agriculture in the national economy and the special means of capital formation in this sector. He emphasised class differentiation in the village and acknowledged the possibility of mobilising the entire peasant stratum for the revolution.

In his work there are two trends. Both are inter-twined and intermingled: class types and militant political action. He identified five class types: 1. Landlords, 2. kulaks, 3. middle peasants, 4. sharecroppers and 5. rural proletariates, and outlined their roles in the context of the revolutionary movement in Russia. Lenin's model was subject to two different forms of analysis: the idea

of a peasant mode of behaviour and of peasant forms of political action. Shanin (1972) raised the question of the differentiation process and emphasised mobility between the class types identified by Lenin, Galeski (1975), while accepting Lenin's thesis about the tendencies which lead to the disintegration of the peasantry, also pointed to the double character of the peasant farm as an enterprise and as a unit of domestic production and to the tension arising out of it.

Mao (1967) accepted Lenin's broad types, developed sub-groups and emphasized the existence of significant differences between them. Mao gave principal importance to the revolutionary potentiality of the poor peasants but in practice recognized the significant role of the middle peasants. Lenin's evaluation of the revolutionary potentiality of the different classes changed in the context of the situation. Initially he emphasized the role of the rural proletariat, but later revised his thinking and placed importance on the role of the Kulaks as harbingers of a bourgeois revolution and underemphasized the role of the middle peasants holding communal land (mir). Later still he revised his opinion in the light of the Russian revolution. Alavi (1973b) analysed the Russian and Chinese revolutions and examined the roles of the different classes of the peasantry in the Indian context and stressed the importance of the role of the middle peasants in revolutionary movements. Wolf (1973) also reached the same conclusion. All these studies are important in understanding the cumulative process of differentiation and the contingent process of polarisation

and confrontation

The Process of Capitalist Penetration in the Indian subcontinent

But what about the actual transformation process from feudalism to capitalism in the specific context of Bangladesh or the Indian sub-continent? On the origins of capitalism, Marx wrote that:

> 'The transition from the feudal mode of production is two-fold. The producer becomes merchant and capitalist, in contrast to the natural agricultural economy and the guild-bound handicrafts of the mediaeval urban industries. This is the really revolutionary path. Or else, the merchant established direct sway over production. However much this serves historically as a stepping stone - witness the English seventeenth century clothier, who brings the weavers, independent as they are, under his control by selling their wool to them and buying their cloth - it cannot by itself contribute to the overthrow of the old mode of production, but tends rather to preserve and retain it as its precondition' (1969, Vol.3, p.334)

Capitalism developed in the Indian sub-continent in the second way, through merchant to manufacturer. These merchants-manufacturers were not indigenous, but were British. Thus the formation of capitalism took place in the Indian sub-continent, unlike Japan, in a colonial setting. The feudal system of property holding remained intact in Japan and the independent peasants and the middle classes were underdeveloped. Capitalism developed

on the basis of a fusion rather than a conflict with absolutism, thus merchant capital was transformed into industrial capital without the necessity of a bourgeois revolution. But in the sub-continental context, capitalism developed through colonial imposition and the British institutionalised the socio-economic-political structure within the framework of a colonial bourgeois state. Following Alavi (1975), can we pose the following questions? Can we call it a part of the world capitalist system as does Frank (1970)? Or can we call it a co-existence of a feudal mode and a capitalist mode within a single economic system, following Laclau (1971)?

Frank, basing himself on Marx, rightly emphasises that the feudal mode of production is a system of localised production and localised appropriation. But he is wrong in his assertion that "capitalism is embodied and developed as one single capitalist system" (1967, p. 240). If capitalism is such, then there would be no way of analytically distinguishing between various capitalist countries nor of characterising the structural specificity of various classes. But he is right in his assertion that the colonial mode of production is integrated into a world capitalist system. This is characteristic of the assimilation of the colonial agrarian economy into a world capitalist system and at the same time its subordination within that system. While Frank focusses on the dominant mode of production, i.e. mode of exchange vis-a-vis production, Laclau focusses on the relations of production. If the relations of production are servile rather than free wage labour, as in the case of labour in Brazilian agriculture, then Laclau points out

that instead of one mode of production, there are in fact, two - namely feudal and capitalist - and that they co-exist within a common 'economic system'. He insists on the connection between feudalism and capitalism, and writes of 'the indissoluble unity' between 'feudal backwardness' and 'bourgeois dynamism'. Laclau is right in pointing out that instead of there being a contradiction between the pre-capitalist mode of production and the capitalist mode of production there is a connection between a colonial 'feudalism' and metropolitan capitalism, because it is precisely the latter that generates and supports the former. This is the structural feature characteristic of a colonial agrarian economy. But he is wrong in his assertion that there exist two separate modes of production operating within the economic system, because colonial agrarian production is part of the capitalist system, its reproduction depends primarily on the general process of capital accumulation and its 'connection' is defined by the structure of Imperialism. The latter structure includes both the developed capitalist countries and the countries of the periphery (colonial countries, countries of the Third World). The specific structure of peripheral capitalism is the colonial mode of production. As Alavi points out: 'the colonial mode was no longer one of simple reproduction but one of extended reproduction. But here again we must recognise its deformity, arising precisely from its colonial status. The result of the internal disarticulation of the colonial economy and the extraction of the surplus by the colonial power meant that the extended reproduction could not be

realised within the economy of the colony but could be realised only through the imperialist centre. The surplus value extracted from the colony went to support capital accumulation at the centre and to raise the organic composition of capital (i.e. higher 'capital intensity of investment') at the centre, while destituting the colonial economy. The colonial form was a deformed extended reproduction.' (Alavi, 1975, p.107) As capitalism in the Indian subcontinent is inserted by imperialism, pre-capitalist relations of production in colonial agriculture are not destroyed, but rather are transformed and reinforced by the world capitalist network. In this way, we can reformulate Frank's interpretation (based on the idea of assimilation and subordination) and Laclau's position (stressing the connection between different modes of production) and redefine the subcontinental situation in terms of the concept of a colonial mode of production (Alavi, 1975).

However, before proceeding, it is imperative to analyse the roles of the different rural classes in a colonial mode of production, namely the 'feudal' landlords who employ share croppers, the 'capitalist farmers' who employ wage labour and the small peasants who cultivate their own farms. But what do we mean by mode of production? And how do we define the relations of production in a colonial setting? 'Mode of production' is a theoretical construct which defines a coherent and historical set of relationships of production and appropriation. From this standpoint, relations of production cannot be understood merely in terms of the form that production relationships

take. Such relationships must exist in a historical setting. Excessive emphasis on the form of the relation between the producer and the master without considering the historical setting may lead us to an inadequate explanation of the mode of production. For example, in the subcontinental situation we find sharecropping of land. Can we equate sharecropping with 'feudalism'? Can we suggest that such a relationship co-exists with 'capitalist' relations? In fact, apart from its superficial form, the substance of the relationship is transformed under the imposition of colonialism. In the pre-capitalist mode of production, the form of the relationship between the producer and his master is structured within a system of localised production and appropriation and power. In such a 'parcellisation of soverignty'(Anderson, 1974), the relationship is based on direct coercion, immediate domination by the landlord over the peasantry. But in the colonial situation state power is institutionalised within the framework of a bourgeois legal and property apparatus. In India the colonial state extracted a large surplus from Indian agriculture in the shape of heavy land revenues (Stokes, 1959). The individual peasant had freedom of mobility, but this freedom was hedged by economic necessities. As a form of relationship between the peasant and the landlord, sharecropping is based on the access to the means of production (land) which is controlled by private owners. In place of direct coercion we find the operation of the laws of a capitalist society.

If we now analyse the roles of the wage-labourers

and the small peasants, what do we find? The colonial economy is destituted in two ways: firstly, in the form of surplus value extracted from the colony to support capital accumulation at the metropolitan centre and to raise the capital intensity of investment at the centre; and secondly, in a lower capital investment in the colony which is reflected in its lower wage level. Thus the metropolitan centre builds up those industries in the colony which are labour-intensive. Cheap labour results in a high rate of profit. Specifically, in the sub-continent, the small peasants subsist on the poverty line. In addition to cultivation, the members of such families are forced to seek supplementary employment both in the rural areas and in urban industries. While the rich peasants produce cash crops and generate a surplus for the colonial economy, the small peasants market an insignificant amount of surplus and supply cheap labour for both agriculture and industry. This cheap reproduction of labour-power is an aspect of the colonial mode of production. This is neither pre-capitalist nor capitalist, but colonial, deformed, subordinated and at the same time assimilated within the network of a world capitalist system. Secondly, in the colonial mode of production, the expanded reproduction of capitalism is also deformed, because a large share of the surplus generated in the colonial economy, both in agriculture and in industry, is appropriated by the metropolitan centre. The process of expanded reproduction enriches not the colonial economy but the metropolitan economy of the centre. This is the difference between the expanded reproduction of capitalism in a colony and the

expanded reproduction of capitalism in the metropolitan centre. Whereas in the latter, the expanded reproduction of capitalism helps to generate capital accumulation and thereby capital intensive methods of production, in a colony the expanded reproduction of capital is geared to raise capital accumulation at the centre at the cost of the colony. This subordination and at the same time assimilation of the colonial agrarian economy to capitalism leads to the internal disarticulation (Amin, 1974) of the colonial economy. The colonial economy is fragmented into various segments; these are linked to the metropolitan economy and are subordinated to it. Assimilation, subordination, connection and internal disarticulation, then, are the constitutive elements of the colonial mode of production.

First Colonial Setting: British Period

In the specific context of Bangladesh, in the first colonial setting, capitalism was mediated through British imperialism. In the second colonial setting capitalism was mediated through the independent state structure of Pakistan. Both settings contributed to the productive structure of Bangladesh; the effect of relations of production (deformed growth) at a given level of development of the productive forces (colonial and post colonial settings) produced a system of conditions and constraints. Thus the differentiation process in rural areas is both historical and cumulative, embracing both colonial settings. Commercialisation of agriculture and commodity production created some differentiation among

the peasantry in Mughal India (Habib, 1963, pp.39-52, 61-81, 118-119, 120-122, 128-129). The British gave momentum to commercialization and commodity production by increasing monetization and profit possibilities and by legalising the transferability of land (Thorner, 1955). The British introduced the system of 'Permanent Settlement' in Bengal in 1793. This system of land revenue settlements empowered the colonial state to receive 90% of the rental from the land. Land became a commodity, and could be transacted within the framework of colonial law. The state appropriated those lands which were not under individual ownership. Appropriation of lands either by the state or by individual owners, combined with population growth, prevented the peasant from leaving his landlord's property and moving elsewhere. His options were either to settle on the land and cultivate it or to leave the land and starve. This created a relationship between the landlord and the peasant which apparently remained 'feudal' but was in fact substantially transformed. The relationship was not based on coercion as we find in feudalism but on the economic laws of capitalism. Furthermore, the colonial state transformed the feudal mode of localised production and appropriation and tied the agrarian economy of Bengal to the imperial economy of Britain. The colonial state introduced railways and steamships in Bengal in the 19th Century. These were utilized to carry raw materials such as jute, cotton and indigo, which were produced by the Bengali peasants for the British economy. Bengal's local industries were destroyed and the artisans were pauperised. Lack of alternative employment

drove them onto the land. This not only increased the pressure on land but also swelled the ranks of the rural destitutes. The colonial form of economy excluded local exchange between the Bengali artisans and peasants. Agricultural produce was tied to the British industries based in England and Bengal became the market for imported manufactured goods. In this way Bengal's economy was disarticulated and subordinated to British colonial capitalism and commodity production was also deformed. This had two basic results: on the one hand the extended reproduction supported capital accumulation and raised capital intensity of investment in the imperial British economy and on the other hand it destituted the colonial economy, specified the status of agriculture within the colonial economy and created the necessary conditions for differentiation among the peasantry. This gave rise to the emergence of a rural landlord-moneylender class and increased differentiation among the peasantry (Gadgil, 1971, pp. 30-31, 160-165, 227-237). Within the rural scene many of the Zamindars created under the Permanent Settlement were Hindus. They and the Hindu moneylenders dominated the rural economy. Religious community differences predominated and masked underlying politics of class. They had nothing in common with the mass of the peasants, the majority of whom were Muslims (Wilbur, 1969). In the first colonial setting, the Bangladesh economy was internally disarticulated by colonial rule and capitalism was mediated through British imperialism. In this social formation, the form of

relationship between the producer and the landlord was transformed from direct coercion to economic compulsion. The peasants' surplus was confiscated by the colonial state, leaving them vulnerable to the Zamindars and the moneylenders. The colonial state extracted the surplus, and the extended reproduction generated capital intensity of investment in the imperial economy. Within the colony, the dominant class in the agrarian situation exploited the Muslim peasants and forced them to liquidate their capital: land.

Second Colonial Setting: Pakistani Period

In the second colonial setting, in place of a distant imperial centre, the mechanisms of a single state economic policy pursued the colonial mode of production, supported the growth of capitalism in Pakistan, assimilated the Bangladesh economy to its growth and made it subordinate. With the partition of India in 1947, the Hindu Zamindars and the Hindu moneylenders fled to India en bloc. Their khas[1] lands were in many cases usurped by the peasants and the sharecroppers, while the land revenue system (Permanent Settlement) created by the British was abolished in 1950. In the rural areas, the rich peasants were dominant, but the majority of peasants belonged to the middle peasant category. Many of them owned nearly five acres of land and produced cash crops for the market, mainly jute. But the state policies of Pakistan altered the situation, confiscated the peasants' surplus and made them dependent upon usury. This resulted in the return of the old pattern of colonial and class exploitation within

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1. Lands that were not sublet, but occupied directly.

a single state context and increased rural stratification. The landlord-bourgeois bloc of West Pakistan and its military-bureaucratic apparatus made up the power structure of Pakistan. The power bloc opted for capitalist growth and used the mechanisms of state economic policy for the accumulation of capital. It adopted three objectives:

1. the expropriation of the agrarian surplus of East Pakistan to provide 'risk' capital for industry,
2. the centralization of the foreign exchange earned by agricultural East Pakistan to pay for necessary imports, and
3. the reorientation of rural commodities to become raw materials for domestic manufactures (Nations, 1971).

Bengal's jute enjoyed a world monopoly and was grown by the small peasants. To achieve the first objective, the government forced the peasants to surrender the foreign exchange earned from sales abroad in return for Pakistani rupees at the official rate. Expropriation of the agrarian surplus of East Pakistan was the outcome of this strategy. The second objective was achieved by centralizing the foreign exchange and by introducing an import licencing system. The licence to import and the foreign exchange necessary to pay abroad were distributed to the business clientele of the bureaucracy, mainly from West Pakistan. The licences were used to bring in both commercial and industrial items to meet consumption and industrial needs. In this fashion, the peasants of East Pakistan subsidized the importers based in West Pakistan (Lewis, 1970). Export of capital to East Pakistan in the case of

selective industries (mainly jute and cotton) which were labour intensive achieved the third objective. The metropolitan capital in this way realised a high rate of profit by exploiting a cheap labour force. It lowered the cost of labour and the necessary wage levels.

The strategy of the Pakistan government was to raise agriculture's marketed surplus and its taxable capacity. The measures used may be divided into two periods:[1]

1. Pre-Plan Period to First Plan Period, and
2. Second Plan Period to Third Plan Period.

In the first period, broadly from 1947 to 1960, the government expropriated the agricultural surplus of East Pakistan. Low prices for agricultural produce, absence of viable public credit institutions and various governmental extortions forced the peasants into debt. In the rural areas, the rich peasants slipped into the power vacuum left by the Hindu landlords and moneylenders. By taking up moneylending, they deepened stratification within rural society. The rich peasant-cum-moneylender accumulated land, cattle and implements and West Pakistan accumulated capital by extracting the agricultural surplus. A survival economy of small peasants resulted, coupled with a rich peasant surplus economy. The survival economy concentrated on food grains whereas the surplus economy developed cash crops.

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1. Pre-Plan Period 1950/1 - 1954/5;
   First Plan Period 1955/6 - 1959/60;
   Second Plan Period 1960/1 - 1964/5;
   Third Plan Period 1965/6 - 1969/70.

In the second period, up to 1970, the government's main concern was to increase the marketed surplus. Emphasis was placed on technology-oriented agricultural development, with government provision of new agricultural and physical inputs and credit. Fertilizer, improved seed and power pumps were made available to the rich peasants. In colonial, rural Bangladesh, this approach had two effects. Not only did the surplus economy of the rich peasants produce cash crops and generate surplus for the metropolitan economy, but also the survival economy of the poor peasants supported the metropolitan economy through the supply of a cheap labour force. Both economies were interlinked and integrated into the colonial mode of production. While the first generated capital accumulation for the metropolitan economy, the second generated a high rate of profit through lower wage levels in the colony. As a result a rich peasant class emerged. Rich peasants became the dominant consumers of industrial goods and marketed the surplus of various products (Islam, 1978). They became dominant in local politics. Out of 392 Union Councillors elected in 1961, 42.4% held 15.5 or more acres of land and only 2.3% held less than 2.5 acres (Rashiduzzaman, 1968). The national Census of 1961 also revealed that landless agricultural labourers (aged twelve years and over) increased from 1.31 millions to 2.17 millions in the decade of 1951 to 1961. This is an increase of 63%. In the same period, the total peasant population increased by only 32.5% The rate of increase of the landless poor is therefore far greater than that for other rural classes (Government of Pakistan, 1961,Vol.1).

Thus, in the second setting of the colonial mode of production in Bangladesh, we find the emergence of a rich peasant class and pauperised middle and small peasant classes forced to seek supplementary employment. We also find that the application of new forms of technology and state subsidies increased the marketable surplus of agricultural commodities. This increase in surplus developed a structural correspondence of interests between the rich peasants and the urban sector. This pattern of development destituted the subordinate classes in the rural areas. The increase in marketable surplus and the rapid rise in the price of commodities displaced the permanent labour force (sharecroppers, etc.). This development has affected the small peasants and a section of the middle peasants, as well asthe landless labourers. As the incomes of the rich peasants multiplied, their expenditure on consumption increased correspondingly, producing an inflationary trend. Along with this, the rapid rise in the prices of commodities eroded the real incomes of the subordinate classes. They were defenceless against the periodic shortages, against natural disaster and the rise in prices of commodities. They were forced into debt, had to sell land and to live on the poverty line. The conflicting interest between the rich peasants and the subordinate classes on the one hand and the corresponding interest between the rich peasants and the urban sector on the other hand shaped the structural alignments and the conflicts of the colonial mode of

production.[1]

Post-Colonial Bangladesh

But in post-colonial Bangladesh, the mode of production is increasingly distanced from the colonial mode in two ways. Firstly, in place of appropriation by the metropolitan centre, surplus value is now appropriated within the country by an indigenous capitalist class and the expanded reproduction, instead of the limits on capital accumulation, partially generates capital accumulation internally which produces a rise in the organic composition of capital. And secondly, the internal disarticulation of the economy is repaired and the economy is linked without any mediation (colonialism under imperialist hegemony or colonialism under a super-state hegemony) to the worldwide capitalist system. These differences shape rural class formations and structure rural class alignments. In the colonial mode, ownership of the means of production and political power were relatively separated in the colony's context. But in the post-colonial situation,

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1. Lenin states: "the system of socio-economic relations existing among the peasantry (agricultural and village-community) shows us the presence of all these contradictions which are inherent in every commodity economy and every order of capitalism: competition, the struggle for economic independence, the grabbing of land (purchaseable and rentable), the concentration of production in the hands of a minority, the forcing of the majority into the ranks of the proletariat, their exploitation by a minority through the medium of merchants' capital and the hiring of farm labourers. There is not a single economic phenomenon among the peasantry that does not bear this contradictory form, one specifically peculiar to the capitalist system, i.e. that does not express a struggle and antagonism of interests, that does not imply advantage for some and disadvantage for others." (1974, p.175).

this interrelationship is mutually reinforcing. This unity is the main source of other social inequalities. The position of each rural class is not determined solely by its access to the control over the means of production, but by its access to political power as well. On the other hand, the pattern of land ownership and distribution reflects the inequalities generated by capital accumulation in the rural areas and shapes the pattern of politics and the agrarian power structure. The agrarian power structure is connected in this manner with the formation of capital in the rural areas.

The stabilisation of a rich peasant class is a notable event in the post-colonial situation. This stable economic base reinforced by political power adds a new dimension to class formation. But in the changed post-colonial context, we find a great deal of fluidity regarding the poor and a section of the middle peasants and a growing stability in the rich peasant category. The rich peasants are now increasing their productive investments, both in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and entering into new alliances to provide a secure environment for such investments. Their activities are not confined to the village. They are now linked with national politics, the national power structure and urban finance. Formation of capital, which could not happen during colonial times, is now secure and producing structural change within the rural areas. At the same time, formation of capital has enlarged and stabilized the class base. The rich peasants now impose class domination on the rural areas and extend class

alliance into the towns and administration. Thus a stable, rich peasant class supported by the national economic and political frame confronts the mass of underprivileged peasants. This shift in the structure of power is the result of change in the modes of post-colonial production. Vertical relationships of interdependence are yielding to the process of differentiation, polarization and structural antagonism.

Outline of the Present Study

The present study, then, is about the processes of differentiation, polarization and confrontation in a peasant society. In Chapter II, I explore the national background in order to focus on the direction of the economy, politics and government policies and their correspondence with the rural situation. I also examine the structural effects of various economic and political developments both in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Chapter III discusses the ecology and the social structure of the village. My aim here is to show how land ownership and land relations shape the social structure. My discussion of family and village groupings, status, inheritance, marriage, kinship and other patterns of interaction, and cropsharing have this end in view. I also stress that there is a close correspondence between non-economic differences and the economic structure.

Chapter IV concentrates on the process of differentiation. Here I show how vertical cleavages in

the village give way to the formation of social classes. As concentration of land increases, a rich peasant class stabilises its position on the village terrain: the formation of capital, characteristic of the post-colonial situation, has enlarged their base, and the interrelationship between the ownership of the means of production and the political power has mutually reinforced their position both on the rural and the national terrain.

In Chapter V, I treat the various problems arising out of the polarization process, by which the poor and a section of the middle peasants disintegrate, while the rich peasants stabilize their position. The poor and some of the middle peasants experience new fluidity in their socio-economic position, whereas the social base of the rich peasants is stable. Polarization represents a shift in the structure of power and a change in the mode of production. Because of these changes, vertical relationships of inter-dependence yield to polarization and structural antagonism.

Chapter VI examines the forms of confrontation and shows that these confrontations emerge from the inequality of access to both economic and political power. Such confrontation is the result of class formation in the unequal access of different social classes to scarce resources. While the rich peasants get support from the national economic and political structure, the under-privileged peasants form their own organizations and start challenging the status quo.

Three case studies exhibiting marked degrees of individual variability in terms of control of resources and access to power are presented in Chapter VII. The studies include an individual of the old power group in conflict with the underprivileged peasants, an individual of the new power group emerging after the war of liberation and devising means of accumulating wealth and power, and an individual of the underprivileged group who heightens social conflicts and creates forms of confrontation.

In the concluding chapter, I discuss the nature of class differentiation and the possible direction of class struggles in Bangladesh.

Chapter II : General Background

The aim of this chapter is to examine some of the structural effects of economic and political development in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. An attempt has been made here to explore the national background of the economy and political activity in order to focus on land relations, rural development, co-operatives, pricing policies and rural power structure with reference to their reciprocal implications and interconnections.

2.1 Pattern of landownership and distribution

'Permanent Settlement', popularly known as the zamindary system, was introduced into Bengal in 1793 by British rule. Under this system zamindars and taluqdars (landlords) exercised control over land in return for payment of land revenue to the government which was to be paid out of the rent they were authorised to collect from the peasants (Stokes, 1959; Guha, 1963). In course of time a large number of rent collecting intermediaries emerged between the colonial state and the peasants.[1]

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1. The crown was ambivalent in their attitude towards the landlords. Abdullah points out: "At the time of the Permanent Settlement (1793) Lord Cornwallis had hoped to create a class of landed aristocrats who, apart from being loyal to the crown, would also devote time and energy to good husbandry, after the manner of the 'gentlemen farmers' of England. Things did not work that way, and it must be conceded that part of the reason may have been the Crown's ambivalent attitude towards the landlords. For it is a matter of record that from the beginning of the nineteenth century, legislation after legislation was enacted which, by 1947, had left the zamindar a proprietor in name only" (Abdullah, 1973, p.).

Around 1950, most of the land in Bangladesh was under the nominal control of the Zamindars. They farmed out portions of their estates to talukdars who created further subordinate tenures. In this way a long chain of intermediaries was created between the state and the raiyat. Apart from the state, broadly there were four classes of people associated with, and having different kinds of rights to the land: 1. Zamindars, 2. the tenure holders, 3. the raiyats and 4. the under-raiyats. Outside these four classes were the sharecroppers and the landless agricultural labourers. The Zamindars and the tenure-holders (talukdars) had little interest in cultivation. That was done by the raiyats and the under-raiyats. The raiyats and the under-raiyats were not similar (Abdullah, 1973, pp 7-10). The under-raiyats (who sub-let land from raiyats) were poorer, had smaller holdings and had to pay higher rents per acre (ibid, p. 10). The other groups in the rural economy were the sharecroppers and the agricultural labourers. According to the Floud Commission (Govt. of Bengal, 1940, Vol. 2, pp. 117-119; Vol. 5, p. 115), 74 percent of the total area enquired into was cultivated by family labour, 19 percent by sharecroppers and 7 percent by hired labour. Again, if we go through the Table compiled by the Floud Commission regarding the size of land holdings (see Table 1), we get a clear picture of differentiation among the different classes of peasants of pre-partition Bangladesh. Along with Bell's account of Dinajpur (1942, pp. 16-17) and Mukerjee's survey (1957, p. 88, Table 2.1), Table I shows that the surplus peasant did exist among the Muslims of Bangladesh before the partition.

Table 1 : Distribution of Families By Size of Land Holding, 1938-39

Districts	No. of families examined	Total area held by families	Average area per family (acres)	Percentage of families with:					
				Less than 2 acres	2-3 acres	3-4 acres	4-5 acres	5-10 acres	Above 10 acres
1. Bakerganj	804	1,752.66	2.17	61.8	13.1	9.1	3.9	10.9	1.2
2. Bogra	464	1,984.45	4.28	34.5	14.2	13.6	12.7	17.9	7.1
3. Chittagong	690	1,693.95	2.45	60.3	10.1	8.8	5.8	10.7	4.3
4. Dacca	508	1,082.27	2.13	62.4	11.6	6.1	6.1	5.1	3.5
5. Dinajpur	1020	6,512.22	6.38	24.2	8.9	11.1	10.2	28.3	15.0
6. Faridpur	1104	1,796.54	1.63	81.5	7.6	3.4	1.8	2.6	0.6
7. Jessore	1073	5,133.74	4.78	28.5	10.3	9.6	9.8	27.1	13.6
8. Khulna	356	1,701.68	4.78	55.6	7.8	9.0	6.1	13.9	7.6
9. Mymensingh	931	3,597.55	3.86	34.1	13.9	11.9	10.5	16.9	6.5
10. Noakhali	502	1,208.43	2.41	65.3	12.1	7.8	3.4	4.2	2.8
11. Pabna	701	1,673.28	2.39	64.1	9.2	5.8	4.1	7.1	2.4
12. Rajshahi	1018	5,617.84	5.52	31.8	9.3	9.7	9.1	25.5	14.6
13. Rangpur	1193	7,964.30	6.67	24.6	15.3	13.4	10.6	21.4	11.2
14. Tippera	950	2,112.91	2.22	63.9	13.7	8.6	4.3	6.6	2.9
Total	11,314	43,831.82		45.85	11.04	9.29	7.47	16.12	7.68

Source: Govt. of Bengal, Report of the Land Revenue Commission (Sir Francis Floud Chairman), 1940, Vol 5, Table VIII (b), p.115 Alipore: Bengal Govt. Press.

If we closely analyse the Floud Commission's table on the distribution of the size of land holdings between 1938 and 1939, we find that the differentiation process is already evident. Those holding over ten acres may be designated "surplus" or "rich peasants", those with roughly four to ten acres "middle peasants". We see then that of the 11,314 families investigated in fourteen districts now comprising Bangladesh, 7.68 percent were rich peasants and 23.59 percent were middle peasants. "Small peasants" can be divided into two groups: those with two to four acres accounted for 20.33 percent of families, while a further 45.85 percent of families held less than two acres. Within the latter group are those holding land including the homestead and who lived as sharecroppers or agricultural labourers. Despite slight discrepancies in the Floud Commission's table, small peasants made up about two-thirds of the families examined, yet they held less than a third of the land. Rich and middle peasants were dominant from the standpoint of landholding. This "domination" needs further clarification. In rural areas prior to partition, the majority of landlords were Hindus, who were dominant not only on a socio-economic plane, but also in the political arena. Muslim rich and middle peasants were both socio-economically inferior to them and politically subordinated. This point can be illustrated by analysing Mukherjee's table below (Table Ia), based on a sample survey of rural Bengal in 1946.

Table Ia : Classes of economic structure, 1946

Classes of Economic Structure	Percentage of Households			
	Caste Hindu	Muslim	Other	Total
I	5	3	2	4
II	37	44	38	42
III	58	53	60	54

Source: R. K. Mukherjee, The Dynamics of a Rural Society: A Study of the Economic Structure in Bengal Villages, 1957, p. 88, Table 2.1

Class I consists of "landlords" and "supervisory farmers". According to Mukerjee, they are "prosperous non-cultivating or supervisory farmers whose topmost position in society is unquestioned" (Mukerjee, 1957, p. 10). Most of the 5 percent of Hindu households in this group are landlords, whereas the 3 percent of Muslim households are principally "supervisory farmers" or rich peasants, despite the fact that numerically, if not proportionately, they form a much larger group than the Hindus in Class I. Class II consists of self-sufficient cultivators (or middle peasants), artisans and traders, Class III of labourers, sharecroppers, service holders, etc. Although Muslim rich and middle peasants dominated the East Bengal rural scene in numerical terms, they were unable to enforce their position socially, economically and politically because the highest and most influential positions were taken by the Hindu Zamindars and their functionaries and by Hindu moneylenders.

Before analysing the implications of the Act of 1950, we

should know the classes of raiyats and their rights to land, revenue procedures and practice and the political significance of the above-mentioned Act. The raiyats were broadly of three types: raiyats at fixed rent, occupancy raiyats and non-occupancy raiyats. These categories were defined by the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. Raiyats at fixed rent, for all practical purposes, were owners of their holdings. They could transfer their holdings and use the land as they liked (Kabir, 1972, p. 108). The rights of the occupancy raiyats were somewhat restricted. The evolution of their right to transfer the holdings came with the Amending Act of 1928, the Amending Act of 1938 and the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1949. By 1949, there was no difference between raiyats at fixed rent and occupancy raiyats (ibid, p. 141). The status of non-occupancy raiyats was defined by custom rather than by legislative enactment (Abdullah, 1973, p. 19; Kabir, 1972, p. 174). The non-occupancy raiyats could not sub-let the land without the permission of the landlord and they could be ejected for non-payment of rent. Abdullah states:

> "The other two classes of raiyats (raiyats at fixed rent and occupancy raiyats) could not be ejected for non-payment of rent; their holdings could be sold in execution of a court decree for arrears. The rent of raiyats at fixed rent could not be enhanced. The rent of occupancy raiyats could be enhanced by suit or by contract. It was only the non-occupancy tenants who were completely at the mercy of 'market forces' in the matter of rent" (1973, pp. 19-20).

It apears from the above discussion that the raiyats at fixed rent and occupancy raiyats were well protected legally. But in actual practice there was wide divergence. It was not always easy for the poor raiyats to seek the protection of the law. The Zamindars were powerful, they had paiks and barkandzas (private bodyguards), they could beat a defiant raiyat, damage his crops, set fire to his house and, if a case ensued, bribe police officers and witnesses. The memorandum submitted by the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha pinpointed the problem:

> "...not a few peasant cultivators prefer to contract themselves into paying enhanced rents rather than go to the trouble of fighting a suit in the Courts" (Govt. of Bengal, 1940, Vol. 6, p. 32).

Another form of illegal exactions was the abwabs. These were extorted from the tenantry over and above the rent on various excuses or no excuse at all. The Floud Commission thus reported:

> "During the second session of the Bengal Assembly, 1937, when the Tenancy Act was under discussion, the total rental of Bengal was assessed by three different speakers at 29 crores (17 crores legal and 12 crores illegal), 30 crores (20 legal, 10 illegal) and 26 crores (20 legal and 6 illegal)" (ibid, Vol. 6, p. 32).

By 1950, the socio-economic-political power of the Zamindars was nearly over. Partition through inheritance, increasing influence of the urban, professional classes, peasant movements (Tebhaga, Hajong, etc.) and the communal discontent increasingly hedged the powers of the Zamindars.

The raiyats at fixed rent and the occupancy raiyats were predominant in pre-partition Bangladesh (Abdullah, 1973, p. 20). They were behind the Pakistan Movement in Bangladesh. The Muslim urban middle class originated from them rather than from the big landlords, since the overwhelming majority of these were Hindus (ibid, pp. 37-40). Under the British colonial imposition, the raiyats had little economic power and they now wanted social prestige and political leverage. Most of the Muslim League leaders of pre-partition Bangladesh were from the emergent urban middle class which had close ties with the small to surplus peasants in the rural areas. The Muslim League government of East Pakistan after the partition promulgated the Act of 1950 which mainly operated against the interests of the Hindu landlords. It is true that a few Muslim landed families were also affected by the Act, but they received adequate compensation in the form of political patronage.

This explains the class nature of the Muslim League government of post-partition Bangladesh, particularly the role played by the surplus peasants. It also helps to explain the nature of the reforms and their implementation. I want to add a few words here on the character of the surplus peasants before going on to explain the formulation of the Act of 1950. The surplus peasants were too dispersed and weak economically to be a really effective pressure group during the 1950's. They stepped into the power vacuum in the rural areas left by the departing Hindu landlords and moneylenders. They were not dynamic in terms of productive or investment efforts, neither had they the strength nor the incentive to affect government policies in this period (Abdullah, 1973, p. 41), because of the state structure of Pakistan which I have discussed in Chapters V and VI.

The first land reform law, promulgated in 1950 during Pakistani rule after the partition of India, abolished the zamindary system in Bangladesh (Government of East Pakistan, 1969). Under the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, all intermediate rent-receiving interests were abolished, and a ceiling on land-holding was placed at one hundred bighas i.e. thirty three acres. The government declared its intention of redistributing land over one hundred bighas. But actual reallocation of land-holding was minimal since only a small amount of land was surrendered. The aim of redistribution was again thwarted when an amendment under East Pakistan Ordinance No. XV in 1961 raised the ceiling from 100 bighas to 375 bighas i.e. 125 acres. The land available for redistribution was only 163,741 acres. Most of it was not suitable for cultivation (Abdullah, 1973). Under this reform the zamindars were eliminated as a force in rural society and the land revenue collection of the government was increased. But the Act of 1950 and the subsequent amendment of 1961 did not improve the condition of the rural poor, the landless labourer and the share-cropper.

After the liberation of Bangladesh, the two significant developments in this area were the Presidential orders, P.O. 96 and P.O. 98, promulgated in August 1972 (Bangladesh Gazette, 1972). The first order exempted all agricultural families owning 25 bighas or less of agricultural land from payment of land revenue. But they would be liable to pay the various cesses and rates: the Development and Relief Tax, the Education Cess, the Local Rate, etc. P.O. 98 reduced the ceiling on retainable land to 100 bighas.

Under Article 7, heads of families holding more than 100 bighas of land are directed to submit a statement of excess lands within ninety days of the date of commencement of the Order. Article 13 states: "compensation will be payable for excess land acquired by the government at the rate of twenty percent of the market value of the land for the first fifty bighas, and ten percent of the market value for quantities over fifty bighas. Families can exercise choice as to which lands they want to give up." (Bangladesh Gazette, 1972). Table 1bgives certain indications of (a) the number of families holding more than 25 bighas of agricultural land and the amount of excess lands according to these returns and (b) the number of families having more than 100 bighas of land and the amount of excess lands to these returns.

Peasant ownership is the general characteristic of the land system of Bangladesh. In return for the right of ownership, peasants pay rent to the government. The pattern of ownership is not uniform and is the basis for differentiation among the different peasant classes. Therefore the number of peasant farms and their sizes are important for analysis. The average farm size in Bangladesh is 3.2 acres (Master Survey of Agriculture, 1967-68). The size of holding is small but its distribution is highly skewed. The Agricultural Census (1960) and the Master Survey of Agriculture (1967-68) took 2.5 acres and 7.5 acres as the dividing lines for identifying landless, small, middle and rich peasants. Needless to say, the landless peasant owns no land. The small peasant is the owner of 0.5 to 8 bigha of land; the middle peasant owns between 9 and 25 bigha; and

the rich peasant is the owner of 25 bigha or more. Table 2 gives a graphic picture of the distribution of farm lands in Bangladesh.

According to the Master Survey of Agriculture 1967-68, the total number of family farms was 68.7 lakhs (6.870.000) In 1973-74, the total number had increased to 70 lakhs. The total farm land was 2.2 crore acres (22 million acres). The average size of farm was 3.1 acres or 9.3 bighas. The average family had seven members.

The classification of the rural population is as follows:

The total population of family-operated farms is 4 crores 90 lakhs;

The total population of landless peasant families is 1 crore 85 lakhs;

The total population of the families of small, middle and rich peasants are 287.0, 268.0 and 35.0 lakhs respectively;

The total cultivated land under the small, middle and rich peasants is 152.0, 310.0 and 198.0 lakhs bighas respectively.

Table 3 points to certain important aspects of the present land system in Bangladesh. Firstly, the distribution of land ownership is uneven. Nearly 27.5 percent of the rural population is landless; 25 percent own 47 percent of the cultivable land; 42.5 percent are the owners of 23 percent of the cultivable land. The population of the small farm families is the highest, but they own the least amount of land. The maximum amount of land is held by the middle peasant. He and the rich peasant represent 41 percent of the total farm ownership and

Table 1b: Submission of Statement by Heads of Families Owning Land Exceeding 25 Bighas and All Kinds of Lands Exceeding 100 bighas under L.A. Nos. 96 and 98 Respecting of 1972

	District	No. of returns filed by families holding land in excess of 100 bighas	Area of excess land as per such returns	No. of returns filed by families holding land in excess of 25 bighas	Total area covered by such returns
1	Dinajpur	579	6,592.00 acres	37,517	5,37,197.00 acres
2	Rangpur	486	4,385.00 acres	53,071	4,63,063.00 acres
3	Bogra	185	3,942.00 acres	11,702	1,70,913.00 acres
4	Rajshahi	300	5,892.00 acres	7,408	1,09,965.00 acres
5	Pabna	261	3,248.00 acres	16,097	2,39,827.00 acres
6	Kushtia	176	2,003.00 acres	15,893	2,56,973.00 acres
7	Jessore	302	268.00 acres	27,230	3,37,740.00 acres
8	Khulna	363	7,095.00 acres	26,245	4,88,239.00 acres
9	Bakerganj	131	1,483.00 acres	16,025	2,66,161.00 acres
10	Patuakhali	137	371.00 acres	10,739	1,70,771.00 acres
11	Faridpur	211	10,825.00 acres	20,475	2,95,826.00 acres
12	Dacca	89	1,534.00 acres	7,212	1,11,934.00 acres
13	Mymensingh	479	5,066.00 acres	43,033	6,24,057.00 acres
14	Tangail	60	568.00 acres	9,225	1,29,534.00 acres
15	Comilla	93	1,452.00 acres	8,829	1,32,397.00 acres
16	Noakhali	205	2,971.00 acres	9,082	1,25,611.00 acres
17	Chittagong	74	2,179.00 acres	3,253	58,259.00 acres
18	Sylhet	728	16,367.00 acres	28,490	4,32,476.00 acres
19	Chittagong Hill Tracts	12	451.00 acres	750	21,266.00 acres
	Total	5,371	76,712.00 acres	328,403	55,32,002.00 acres

Source: Ministry of Land Administration and Land Reforms, Govt. of Bangladesh

Table 2 : The number and size of farmlands in Bangladesh

Different sizes (in acres)	% of total farms		% of total land under farm	
	1960A	1968 B	1960	1968
Less than 0.5	13.30	12.26	1	1.16
0.5 to 1	11.17	12.70	2	3.08
1 to 2.5	27.00	31.67	12	17.08
2.5 to 5	26.00	26.32	27	29.97
5 to 7.5	12.00	9.20	20	17.77
7.5 to 12.5	7.00	5.25	19	15.52
12.5 to 25	3.10	2.16	14	10.95
25 to 40	0.35	0.36	3	3.30
40 acres and above	0.08	0.08	2	1.17
	100.00	100.00	100	100.00

Source: A) Agricultural Census, 1960

B) Master Survey of Agriculture, 1967-68, 7th round, 2nd series.

Table 3 : Classification of peasants based on farm size

Classification	Total % of total farms		% of total land under farm		Total farms (Lakhs)		Population (Lakhs)		Total land (Lakh bigha)	
	1964/5	1974	1964/5	1974	1965	1974	1965	1974	1965	1974
1 Landless peasant							122	185		
2 Small peasant (0.5-8 bigha)	68	59	27	23	45	41	293	287	178	152
3 Middle peasant (9-25 bigha)	27	34	45	47	17	24	110	168	297	310
4 Rich peasant (25 bigha and above)	5	7	28	30	4	5	26	35	185	198
Total	100	100	100	100	66	70	429/551	490/675	660	660

Source: A) Master Survey of Agriculture, 6th round, 1964/65

B) Master Survey of Agriculture, 7th round, 2nd series 1967/68 (up-dated)

together are the owners of 77 percent of the total cultivable land.

The second point to consider is that the average size of the farms is very small. Table 4 shows the size of farms. The man-land ratio is the principal reason for the smallness of the average farm. Despite the overall smallness, the size of different kinds of farm is significant. A small farm averages less than 4 bigha; the average size of a middle farm is nearly 13 bigha; but the large farm of the rich peasant is, on average, almost 40 bigha. From the standpoint of land and the average farm size, the impact of the middle and large farm on the agrarian social structure of Bangladesh is maximal. In other words, the rich peasant and the middle peasant are the dominant classes in the rural areas. The middle peasant is proportionately the more dominant of the two as the total amount of controlled land by this sector is larger than that of the rich peasant. The middle peasant also receives assistance from the government in the form of exemption from tax. But from the standpoint of farm size classified into different categories, the rich peasant is economically the most influential. Moreover the average farm size of the rich peasant is a clue to the consolidation of land that has occurred in Bangladesh. The third factor is that the landless and the small peasant form 70 percent of the rural population. They are the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat. In the fourth place, stable land area and increasing population pressure has decreased the overall average farm size; but on the other hand, consolidation of land is gaining momentum.

Table 4 : Size of farm

Farm Size (bigha)	Total No. of farms (Lakhs)	% of total farms	Total Land (Lakh Bigha)	% Total farm-land	Total Popula-tion	Average farm (Bigha)
- 0.5	8.6	12.3	7.9	1.2	60.2	0.9
0.5-3.0	8.9	12.7	20.5	3.1	62.3	2.3
3.0-4.5	8.9	12.7	33.9	5.1	62.3	3.4
4.5-7.5	13.3	19.0	79.2	12.0	93.1	6.0
7.5-10.5	9.6	13.7	85.8	13.0	67.2	8.9
10.5-15	8.8	12.6	111.5	16.9	61.6	12.7
15-25	7.1	10.2	120.4	18.7	49.7	17.3
25+	4.8	6.8	195.0	30.0	33.6	41.4
Total	70.0	100.0	660.0	100.0	490.0	9.4

Source: Statistical Bureau, Government of Bangladesh; Agricultural Master Survey, 7th round, 2nd series, 1967-68.

In view of the numerical preponderence of small peasants, can we call Bangladesh, following Chayanov (1966), a 'peasant economy'? Chayanov states: 'A peasant economy is not a watershed between capitalism and socialism but is based on the fundamental institutional framework of the family. Thus the peasant path to modernization is a combination of agricultural extension, co-operative organization and family economy'

(1966, pp.41-42).[1] According to him the peasant farm is a fundamental unit of the economy. As the peasant economy reproduces itself through the family, its aim of production is household consumption, not rent or profit. The peasant economy is operated by non-wage family labour, hence the defining feature of a peasant economy is the absence of a labour market. But Chayanov fails to recognise the relations between farms and regions as a whole and the correlation of labour market participation with ex-post poverty. If we treat the peasant farm as a production unit, it becomes a fusion of an enterprise and a domestic economy. Galeski states: "It is this fusion, above all, which determines the special characteristics of the peasant farm as a production unit.

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1. Marx saw the peasant smallholding as a form of property which 'excludes co-operation, division of labour within each separate process of production, the control over, and the productive application of, the forces of nature by society, and the free development of the social productive powers' 1967-71, vol. 1, p.762). Chayanov contradicted this and developed a theory of peasant economy based on the specific structure of the peasant economy: the application of non-wage family labour to the household farm. Thorner's version is an extension of Chayanov's theory. According to Thorner, "We have defined peasant economies in terms of the predominance of agriculture, both in total product and in the working population. We have required the existence of a territorial State, and a separation between town and country. We have indicated that the characteristic unit of production must be the peasant household with a double orientation, that is, both to its own sustenance and to the greater world beyond the village. We must emphasise that no single one of these elements will suffice to determine whether or not a given economy is indeed a peasant economy. All these features must be found together and must relate to the economy of a whole country' (1971, pp.207-208).

For the functioning principles of the enterprise differ from those of the domestic economy. The enterprise produces exchange values, which necessarily involve the evaluation of all operations from the point of view of the relation of output to input, as well as profitability, whereas the domestic economy has to do primarily with use values which are measured according to the needs they satisfy and the extent to which they do so " (1975, p.11). This double function of the peasant farm is guided in production and exchange decisions by the peasants' estimates of the market situation and of profitability. In this process small farms tend to become more domestic, and large farms more enterprising. Again small farms face price constraints set by large farms in factor and product markets. Thus it becomes obvious that peasant society (or economy) is unstable, not homogeneous and peasants do in fact exploit each other; the peasant economy is not free of market pressures and of class antagonisms.

In present-day Bangladesh, peasant economic differentiation and polarization are predominant features; and if this is the case then it becomes difficult to conceptualise the rural sector as relatively undifferentiated and based upon a peasant economy of the type described by Chayanov. The primary survey of 140 villages conducted by the Agricultural Ministry of Bangladesh (1974), the survey of <u>langerkhans</u> (gruel kitchens) carried out during the famine of 1974 by the Institute of Development Studies, Dacca, the examination I made of Savar and Manikgonj, and the famine reports carried by the newspapers Daily Bangla and Daily Sangbad are all pointers to this. In all these surveys and reports, the following factors are pre-eminent:

that the alienation of land is gaining momentum, the number of landless peasants is increasing, the crop-sharing system is declining, and, due to the rise in prices of agricultural commodities, the value of land is increasing. The growing alienation of land suggests the growth of class power, while the rise in the number of landless peasants points to the potentiality of increased class conflict. It also suggests a weakening in the patron-client system as the system of sharecropping declines, and the high price of agricultural commodities indicates the development of more commercialised forms of economy. Table 5 provides a picture of the proportion of cereal and commercial crops in cultivated land.

Table 5 : Proportion of Cereal and Commercial Crops in Cultivated Land

Year	Cultivated land (Lakh Bigha)	Cereal (Lakh) Rice	Cereal (Lakh) Total	Commercial Crop (Lakh) Jute	Commercial Crop (Lakh) Sugarcane	Commercial Crop (Lakh) Pulses	Commercial Crop (Lakh) Seeds	Commercial Crop (Lakh) Total
1947-48	239.0	190.0	194.4	20.6	2.1	9.9	6.9	44.6
1950-51	245.9	200.0	204.1	17.1	2.3	10.1	7.2	41.8
1953-54	240.5	200.0	209.3	9.6	2.6	10.4	7.9	36.2
1956-57	241.1	200.0	204.5	12.3	2.5	8.3	7.6	37.0
1959-60	255.5	211.5	214.9	13.8	2.8	7.9	8.8	40.6
1962-63	263.5	214.8	219.1	17.2	3.2	6.3	8.5	43.9
1965-66	283.5	231.3	234.6	21.0	3.8	8.5	9.4	48.9
1968-69	299.7	240.7	246.6	21.7	4.1	9.1	8.7	53.1
1969-70	316.5	254.9	260.6	24.6	4.1	9.0	8.6	55.9
1970-71	301.1	244.9	248.0	22.0	4.0	9.2	8.6	53.1
1971-72	279.9	229.7	232.8	16.8	3.5	8.9	8.6	47.5

Source: Government of Bangladesh, Statistical Digest of Bangladesh, 1970-71, Tables 4.1-4.10;
Planning Commission; Annual Plan 1973-74, pp. 30 and 33.

Though economic distance is increasing between the classes, there is a tendency to present the peasants of Bangladesh as "classless" due to the smallness of farm size (Abdullah, Mosharaf and Nations, 1974; Khan and Latif, 1974). Abdullah et al. argue that we may have social inequality, but this has not yet led to class conflict:

> "The inequality, however, is made tolerable, the dominance veiled, and the stratification obscured by kinship and quasi-kinship formations in which dominance is legitimised through extra-economic, personalised sanctions."

And again:

> "It is these factional groupings which dissipate class conflict on the one hand, and impede the accumulation of capital on the other. For the way to win prestige in the village is not by making immense quantities of money, but by enlarging one's follower group and keeping them happy by a redistribution of his surplus. Nor is there room within this network of personal relations for introduction from the top (i.e. by the faction leader) of labour disciplines or labour displacing technology. There are no 'markets' for land or labour where the blind laws of supply and demand work out their inexorable and impersonal logic. Labour and land exchanges are embedded in the more diffuse social relations" (Abdullah et al., 1974, p. 25).

Is this observation true? According to Bertocci:

"absolute smallness in farm size should not obscure the importance of small differences in land ownership and associated economic activities associated with them as these reflect clear variations in class, status, life style and power" (Bertocci, 1970, p. 37).

The most significant issue is the actual extent of socio-economic differences in the peasantry. Since the liberation of Bangladesh, chronic food shortages (from 1972 onwards), floods (1974), famine (1974) and the steep increase in prices of agricultural commodities have created land problems. On the one hand, food shortage, floods and famine have forced small peasants and sharecroppers to sell land; on the other, because of rising prices of agricultural commodities, the owners of surplus land are declining to make it available for sharecropping. As a result, the small peasants or the sharecropping landless peasants are rapidly becoming poorer and more landless. Kinship dependency is unable to check this trend.

Here in Bangladesh, formation of classes centres on property relations, and other types of relations derive from these. For instance, the different tenurial arrangements are consequences of, among other things, the pattern of land ownership and the level of technology. In most cases, the socio-politico-economic domination originated from the pattern of land ownership. To begin with, we may identify three different classes: rich, middle and small peasants. It is difficult to draw accurately the dividing lines because they vary from region to region and also over time. For convenience, we accept the Master Survey of Agriculture's (1967-68) categories: small peasant - owner of 0.5 to 8

bigha land; middle peasant - owner of 9 to 25 bighas; rich peasant - owner of 25 bighas and above. These three classes are characterised by degrees of access to economic, political and social power. In this power dominance the rank ordering from top to bottom is: rich, middle and small peasant. The per capita income of different groups (BIDS surveys), their representation in local institutions such as Union councils (Jahan, 1972) and cooperatives (Mannan, 1972), and the extent of their social leadership all underlie this ranking.

Closely related to the class structure are the prevailing modes of production in agriculture in the rural areas. There is debate on how one should characterise the modes of production in Bangladesh agriculture. Abdullah et al. maintain that "the modes of production which give rise to clear class distinctions are both at best vestigial in Bangladesh" (1974, p. 25). The opposite view, that Bangladesh agriculture is capitalist, is held by Akhlaqur Rahman (1974). According to Rahman, the pattern of land ownership, disparity among peasants, consolidation of land holding, internal contradiction in agricultural production, current production relations, division of labour and the application of modern production equipment all indicate that the nature and characteristics of Bangladesh agriculture is capitalist. He maintains that sharecropping, moneylending and fixed renting are manifestations of a capitalist agriculture. He rejects a feudal characterization on the strength of the fact that in Bangladesh only about 18 percent of the land is tenant-operated.

Before proceeding to analyse the structural significance of the agricultural transformation in Bangladesh, I want to briefly discuss the political economy of agricultural

development in pre- and post-liberation Bangladesh. In the initial period of Pakistani rule, the government of East Pakistan abolished the Zamindari system by the Act of 1950 and eliminated the landlords as the dominant force in the society (see section 2.1). It also set a ceiling on landholding at 33 acres. The Six Year Plan and the First Five Year Plan under Pakistani rule were minimally implemented and agriculture was assigned a very low priority. This was the general pattern during the 1950's until Ayub Khan emerged on the political scene of Pakistan. His regime introduced a number of measures: 1. removal of regional disparity was made a constitutional obligation, 2. planned economic development through the formulation and implementation of Five Year Plans was taken up seriously, 3. an increased allocation of funds was made to the development of agricultural and water resources, 4. a rural works programme was introduced, 5. the land ceiling was raised from 33 acres to 125 acres, and lastly, 6. various fiscal, monetary, commercial and administrative measures were introduced to channelise capitalist growth. In East Pakistan, only half-hearted attempts were made to transform agriculture through diffusion of new technology. The rich and a section of the middle peasants reaped the benefits of various types of patronage distributed by the regime. These patronages were primarily in terms of control over resources. After the liberation of Bangladesh, the Awami League introduced a land reform that lowered the ceiling to 33 acres, a level set earlier in 1950, and abolished land tax up to 8.3 acres. This, in brief, is the process of colonial and post-colonial

government measures in agriculture. The significance of this agricultural transformation is analysed in the next section.

2.2 Structural Significance of Agricultural Transformation

Agriculture, in Bangladesh, is structurally capitalistic (Alavi, 1975). One important aspect of this transformation is that it combines features of different and even opposite modes of production in one and the same region (and even in one and the same household in the study area). Another important aspect is the continuous growth of capitalist relations. This combination of different and even opposite modes of production is in part the result of a double colonail imposition. In the British period, the colonial government transformed the feudal mode of localised appropriation and subordinated it to the capitalist metropolitan economy of England. In the Pakistani period, the colonial economy of Bangladesh was destituted by minimal capital investment and agricultural surplus was extracted to support capital accumulation in West Pakistan by the imperialist centre. At present, the economy contains four features:

a. commodity production,

b. free wage labour force,

c. circulation of capital in the countryside, and

d. tenancy relations in agriculture.

(This is elaborated in Chapters IV, V and VI.) The economy contains two or more distinct modes of production, which are simultaneous and over-

lapping. It is imperative to focus analytically on the complex of production relations prevalent and to pinpoint the position of the different units of the agrarian community in this complex. Again, it is essential to analyse the transformation process of the material and social basis of production from the British colonial period to the Pakistani colonial period within the framework of the capitalist economy in concrete terms. The process of transformation towards capitalism in the post-colonial period must also be assessed.

Since the production relations are complex and the institutional and organisational bases are overlapping, the transformational process cannot be studied purely within the pre-capitalist frame of analysis or the capitalist frame of analysis, leaving aside the colonial imposition. It is necessary to analyse the operation of the pre-capitalist areas undergoing transformation within a framework relevant to that particular historical, colonial concrete setting. Again, there exists in a transitional process small areas of economy where the capitalist categories of analysis are relevant. Therefore, for a meaningful analysis of the complex of production relations prevalent and for a concrete study of the different classes in this complex, a separation of the different analytical areas is needed. In societies of delayed industrialization, and colonial imposition, the transformation takes different forms. According to Shanin:

> "The development of capitalist economic relations in its full sense is slow even at the richest and poorest poles of the peasant society more exposed

to it; the diversity is rather that of rich versus poor within a variety of traditional dependencies. The speed and character of such a development has been very much subject to the nature and major economic trends of the broader 'encircling' society"

(Shanin, 1974, p.192).

The analytical areas are separated by different modes of production. In defining a mode, care is taken to distinguish its specific features which imply specific lines of development peculiar to each mode. Thus Henri Lefebvre writes:

"An essentially identical economic base may, under the influence of various empirical factors, present considerable gradations and variations (Marx), especially in the semi-proletariat strata. In agriculture - which retains some features distinguishing it from industrial production until it, too, attains the level of a big industry - analysis discerns various classes, sub-classes and social strata: tenant farmers, farmers, agricultural labourers, small, medium and big landowners (linked or not linked with the industrial bourgeoisie). These socio-economic constellations form different groups according to the features of production in the agricultural sector - quantitative or qualitative, specialized or not specialized. Thus, even at the level of productive forces, structure and particular combinations of circumstances interact continually. But the resulting diversity and mobility do not in any way prevent the process of polarization into classes, which remains

the pivot of analysis " (Lefebvre, 1972, pp. 105-106).

A mode of production is identified by its primary contradiction, by its fundamental relations of production. Our attempts will be to catalogue all the relations of production entered into by rural households and then to classify these relations into separate analytical areas based on different modes of production. Peasant households form the nuclei of peasant society. The nature of peasant households seems to constitute the single, most significant characteristic of the peasantry as a special social phenomenon and to give rise to the generic features displayed by peasantries all over the world. A peasant household is characterized by the nearly total integration of the peasant family's life with its farming enterprise (Shanin, 1972).

But how do we identify the modal character of specific production relations as they exist in the changing village economy? For example, it would be off the mark to define a mode merely according to the extent of tenant cultivation. Tenant cultivation points to 'feudal' relations. But certain 'feudal' relations are transformed into new relations in response to changed economic forces, the policies of government and political movements. In this way tenancy as a production relation may change its particular form. In this way it expresses a different social situation and a different class content. Can we say that actual eviction from land and appropriation of surplus production is identified with feudalism? In the first case, almost all contracts are crop contracts. They

are annual agreements which both parties enter into each year through a process of individual bargaining. Both parties seek the most profitable terms and conditions. No doubt the economic condition of the poor tenant may force him into accepting exploitative terms. This again depends on whether he has alternative sources of income or sources of additional income. This relation no doubt is based on exploitation but does not conform to the production relations of the feudal mode. In the second case, the laws of private property enforced and protected by the state (Constitution of Bangladesh) entitle a land-owner to rent, but a feudal landlord cannot realise his rent exclusively based on rights. In a transitional economy, tenants voluntarily enter into contracts with landlords to pay rent for the land leased. Refusal to pay rent leads to eviction of the tenant. Again, the rich peasant possesses considerable land, employs semi-oermanent or permanent labourers to a significant extent, saves part of his income but makes little productive investment so as to modernise agriculture and to increase production. How can they be characterized? Are they classical feudal lords? Are they modern agricultural capitalists? They are transitional people, representing a transitional phase from double colonial production relations to post-colonial production relations within the framework of capitalism. From another standpoint, the employment of wage labour is an indicator of the rising number of agricultural labourers which is the "principal manifestation of capitalism" (Lenin, 1964, P.237).

Wage labour reflects a different economic rationale and

it has to be understood in the concrete setting of the village and the particular historical period. In this context, we should be on guard that:

> "it is quite possible that if out of a number of factors, one determinant was different, the entire mechanism of exploitation (and so the character of property) might be entirely different. Let us suppose that given a technique of production most suited to peasant agriculture, there is a favourable man-land ratio in conditions of production-for-use. This may lead to serfdom, i.e. to dispersed manorial units with individual lords tying down peasants to their land (as in Feudal Europe). In conditions of larger commodity production, however, the very same other factors may lead to a centralized collection of rent/surplus (e.g. as land revenue), so that the peasant is unable to escape exploitation wherever he is (e.g. Mughal India). On the face of it, the first suggests a more developed form of private property, but the latter might well represent a higher stage of evolution since it represents a greater advance in commodity production. Which of the two forms is theoretically nearer to Capitalism; and is the latter form 'feudal' at all? Indeed, in such circumstances the difficulty of reducing the number of systems of class-exploitation to three becomes obvious. The Mughal-Indian system, for example, could be identifying feudalism with serfdom and then stretching the significance of the term serfdom to include all kinds of compulsion upon the peasant,

be designated at least semi-feudal by Dobb's definition of feudalism; but it would not be such by Sweezy's (serfdom and 'a system of production for use'). The first course would result in making the significance of the term feudal so broad that almost any pre-capitalist system, even the classic slave society containing as it did large elements of peasant cultivation, could conceivably qualify for it" (Irfan, 1973, p. 7).

Since the economy combines different modes, it is difficult to classify every household into one or another category distinctly. Because of the contours of the social situation, particular households may combine two sets of production relations at one and the same time. How should such households be classified? Or to which analytical area do they belong? Take, for example, the household of Imaj Ali Bepari. He is landless, share-crops a small plot of land belonging to Boro Dewan, is a petty bepari (trader) who moves from one village market to another with merchandise on his head. Like him, there are many households which reflect contradictory relations of production. They exhibit agrarian transition. I have decided to classify households based on the modal character of their production relations: i.e. the source of the major portion of incomes.

This illustration points to this fact that though different modes of production are articulated in a transitional economy the capitalist mode of production is dominant. In order to examine the nature of the dominant structure, it is necessary to deal with the role of State.

As rural development touches land reform, cooperatives and pricing policies, we will analyse the intended and also the unintended consequences of these.

2.3 Government Policy towards Rural Development

After liberation, the new Bangladesh government announced that:

> "The cooperatives have been envisaged as a vehicle for economic development enabling the farmers to rally together to protect themselves from domination by landlords, money lords, money lenders of a semi-feudal society to develop a new leadership to challenge the traditional vested interests" (Integrated Rural Development, Proposal for the First Five Year Plan).

It is noteworthy that the I.R.D.P. characterised the society as semi-feudal, dominated by landlords and others. Is this an accurate view of the situation? Firstly, over 80 percent of the land is owner-operated. These are family farms worked by family labour. As I have shown, the Master Survey of Agriculture, 1967-68, makes it clear that the middle peasants dominate the rural economy with the help of the rich peasants. The majority of rentiers and money lenders in the rural economy are in most cases rich peasants. Land is rented in and out among the middle and small peasants. The placing of emphasis on landlords has misdirected the government's rural development policy. Secondly, the government's emphasis on a semi-feudal economy focusses on direct forms of exploitation of labour by the feudal landlords who employ sharecroppers.

It is wrongly assumed that tenancy and sharecropping have evolved out of a feudal agricultural situation and that they are incompatible with capitalism (Frank, 1970; Laclau, 1971). The position is that the Bangladesh economy developed from a colonial situation which preserved some elements and destroyed some others of the pre-capitalist economy, but which in general quickened and regressed capitalist growth.[1] This continual inter-change between capitalist and pre-capitalist relations is the result of the double colonial setting: British and Pakistani periods.

The historical context is this: after the abolition of the Zamindars, a class of rich peasants enforced their position in the social, economic and political scene in the rural areas. As I.R.D.P. focussed exclusively on the large landowners, the real threat of the rich peasants was obscured.

2.4 Politics of Cooperatives

The cooperatives have passed through two phases. In the first phase, they were credit-oriented. The substance of the Comilla experiment, started in 1959, revolved around training, extension work and credit in conjunction with the raising of the level of rural savings (Rahman, 1972a; 1972b; Mannan, 1972; A. A. Khan, 1971). The Comilla

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1. Paresh Chattopadya pinpoints the problem: "The British preserved as well as destroyed the conditions of Indian pre-capitalist economy, accelerated as well as retarded the development of capitalism in India" (Chattopadya, 1972). Pakistan did the same within the context of a single state.

experiment in its initial stage supported the interests of the marginal and subsistence peasants. These peasants were keen to boost production but had little capital to improve their cultivation methods. The early cooperatives helped them by teaching new methods of cultivation and brought within their reach institutional credit facilities at lower interest rates. The small peasants were the first to join the cooperatives. The extension of institutionalized credit facilities to small peasants and to marginal peasants conflicted with the interests of the real sources of credit: rich peasants and professional money lenders and traders. Rich peasants along with others resisted the programme and tried to sabotage it by various means from propaganda to defaulting on large loans. Despite their efforts, the experiment was successful in raising productivity.

Table 6 : District-wise productivity level

District	Yield per acre (tons) Average of 5 years ending in 1966-67	1971-72	Percentage Change
Comilla	0.44	0.53	+28.75
Chittagong	0.52	0.64	+23.32
Mymensing	0.41	0.42	+12.98
Faridpur	0.32	0.31	- 1.81

Source: I.R.D.P., Comparative Study of Food Production in Four Districts of Bangladesh - Role of Institutional Infrastructure, Dacca, October, 1972 (Mimeo), first Appendix Table.

Similarly, a comparative study of sample cooperative peasants in Comilla thana[1] and sample non-cooperative peasants in the neighbouring thana of Chandina shows that the cooperative peasants improved their economic situation between 1963-64 and 1969-70. Details are to be found in Table 7.

In the second phase, when the cooperatives became a channel for productive inputs, the relation changed. The rich peasants, instead of resisting, joined the cooperatives and derived benefits from the new resources. There was nothing in the structure of the cooperatives to give protection to the poor peasants against the superior assets of the rich peasants. Table 8 depicts the position in 1967, where we see that the landless had some access in proportion to their strength. But recent trends are somewhat different. The participation rate of the landless has declined. There is a higher participation in the 10 - 15 acre group. Table 9 presents relevant data for four villages from different thanas. In all these thanas, the I.R.D.P. established a Thana Central Cooperative Association in 1972 to 1973. Again we find negligible participation by the landless and over representation for all higher groups.

The tables presented here make clear the intrusion of the relatively affluent peasants into the cooperatives. This may be due to increased interest in production and consequently in pumps and inputs. This interest in the

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1. Thana means police station, and a unit of political administration. It is equivalent to tehsil of other parts of South Asia and a county of the U.S.A.

Table 7 (a): A comparison of co-operative member farmers of Comilla Thana with non-member farmers of Chandina Thana.

Thana	Rice Production			Rate of Production at Current Rate			Value of Produce sold			Quantity of Rice sold		
	Average Annual Production (Maunds/ acres)			Value of Annual Production per family			Value of Produce Sold per Family			Av. Annual Quantity of Rice Sold per family		
	1963-64	1969-70	Annual Rate of Increase in %	1963-64	1969-70	Annual Rate of Increase in %	1963-64	1969-70	Annual Rate of Increase in %	1963-64	1969-70	Annual Rate of Increase in %
Comilla	24.1	47.6	16	TK884	Tk2, 736	35	Tk 399	Tk1, 106	30	9.6md	35. Omd	44
Chandina	29.8	33.4	2	Tk1, 063	Tk2, 161	17	Tk 377	Tk 730	16	11.4md	16.1md	7

Source: Rahman, Mamoodur, Union Co-operative Multi-purpose Society under the Old System and Village Co-operative Society Based on Comilla Approach, BARD, Comilla, 1972 (Mimeo) pp.20-22

Table 7 (b): Continuation of Table 7 (a)

Thana	Family Income			Value of Owned Assets at Current Prices			Value of Liquid Assets		
	Per Capita Income in a Family			Average Value of Owned Assets per Family			Average Value of Liquid Assets per Family		
	1963-64	1969-70	Annual Rate of Increase in %	1963-64	1969-70	Annual Rate of Increase in %	1963-64	1969-70	Annual Rate of Increase in %
Comilla	Tk 243	Tk 565	22	Tk13, 403	Tk27, 194	16	Tk 281	Tk1,412	67
Chandina	Tk 194	Tk 351	14	Tk12, 144	Tk19, 945	10	Tk 210	Tk 385	13

Source: Rahman, Mamoodur, Union Co-operative Multi-purpose Society under the Old System and Village Co-operative Society Based on Comilla Approach, BARD, Comilla, 1972 (Mimeo). pp.20-22

Table 8 : Distribution of land in 28 Co-op sample villages, 1967

Size Class	Percentage of families % of members	Average %
No cultivable land	14.35	15
0.80 acres or less	22.95	26
0.80 acres - 2.00 acres	28.29	28
2.00 acres - 4.00 acres	25.10	18
4,00 acres - 6.00 acres	6.30	8
6.00 acres or more	2.50	5

Source : A. Aziz Khan et al., Area Paper: Comilla Kotwali Thana, Bangladesh, paper presented at the FAO/UNDP Workshop on "Problems of small and marginal farmers and landless labourers", 25-28 March, 1974; BARD, 1974, Appendix Tables 8-9.

Table 9 : Land ownership in four villages under Thana Central Co-operative Association, 1973

Size class (in acres)	Area in Decimals							
	Members				Non-members			
	No.	%	Area Owned	%	No.	%	Area Owned	%
No land	2	5.41	0.0	2.99	261	43.43	0	9.02
Up to 1 acre	6	16.22	355.0	2.99	146	24.29	4294	9.02
1 and below 2.5	10	27.03	1167.0	9.39	112	18.64	14381	30.21
2.5 and below 5	8	21.62	1860.0	15.69	56	9.32	11827	24.84
5 and below 5	5	13.51	1673.0	14.11	13	2.16	5855	12.30
7 and above	6	16.22	6301.5	57.37	13	2.16	11250	23.63
	37	100.00 approx	11856.5	100.00 approx	601	100.00 approx	47607	100.00 approx

Source: I.R.D.P. Benchmark Survey, 1974

material of high productivity is linked with the wish to gain instruments for local control, for consolidation of factions through doling out inputs, credits etc. We may conclude that the rich peasants are likely to gain more from the cooperatives, Location of pumps and tubewells are likely to be decided on the basis of proximity to the land of the more affluent strata (as has been done in the case of Boro Dewan in M & N). Similar considerations apply to the allocation of fertilizer, insecticides etc. It becomes clear that the affluent classes dominate the cooperatives, though their domination is based on access to government and their ability to provide inputs to raise production.

This brings us to the major focus of our argument: the relation of government to the cooperatives. Abu Abdullah and Richard Nations state:

"In extending the administrative apparatus into the countryside without effecting a fundamental change in the rural class structure, the government may have succeeded in extending the control of the rich peasantry over the government itself. The cooperatives establish a direct relationship between the organized sectors of the peasantry and the government around the procurement of inputs. But this is in no way linked to the procurement of the increased output brought about by the new technology. And indeed with an inadequate industrial structure to exchange manufacturers on equal terms with agricultural produce there is no guarantee that increased production will lead to increased marketed 'surplus'. On the one hand, the government now has a new instrument - its pumps - which it

can withhold in order to pull the peasantry in line with national policy; on the other hand, the peasantry always have their grains, which they can stock and store until prices rise to their timing. Bangladesh is already in the throes of a procurement crisis and it is very difficult to say whether the spread of the cooperatives will relieve the present grain shortage with increased output or consolidate the hold of the rich peasants over the government. The government could well find itself the prisoner of its own policies in agriculture as all the principal issues of prides, procurement, subsidies and eventually technology went in favour of the better organized sector - the cooperatives in agriculture" (1974, pp.25-26).

This hold over government is crucial, which directly or indirectly influences governmental policies regarding prices, procurement, subsidies. In the next section we discuss this.

2.5 Pricing and Procurement Policy

The policies adopted by the government (both pre-liberation and post-liberation periods) in this sphere have significant implications for agricultural prices, production, allocation of resources and inter - and intra-sectoral distribution of income. In the pre-liberation period, Pakistan's economy had one principal asset, a cash-crop agriculture. This agriculture was based in East Pakistan, which exported raw materials, especially jute and food products. They were the principal foreign-exchange earners. On this economic base the colonial government was determined to build import-

substitution industries under a protective tariff barrier and export taxes on major exportables (jute and food products). Thus the government introduced "free enterprise" in favour of a small group of trading communities based in West Pakistan. Its objectives were threefold: 1. to expropriate the agrarian surplus for generating capital for industry; 2. to centralise the foreign exchange earned by agriculture for payment of the necessary imports, and 3. to reorientate rural commodities for use in domestic manufactures. All these had an adverse effect on the terms of trade of agriculture vis-a-vis the manufacturing sector.[1] Thus the jute/rice price ratio moved against jute; slowly and gradually East Pakistan's agriculture shifted towards a survival economy, towards food grains and away from cash-crops. This was behind the contraction of jute and the spread of rice.[2] In this way West Pakistan's industry was financed, using the Bengali peasant's margin of surplus. In the course of time, surplus in East Pakistan dried up, the economy relapsed into paralysis and usury became more profitable than investment. The long depression of agricultural prices had its impact on the peasants and they were gradually forced into debt.

In another area, the government policy regarding the introduction of new seed/fertilizer/irrigation technology

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1. On intersectoral terms of trade, see Lewis and Hussain, 1967; 1970.

2. See Nations, 1971; also Sobhan, 1968.

needs analysis. The policy was implemented in the early 1960's, and the inputs were provided at subsidized rates. The rate of subsidy averaged about 50% on fertilizer and 100% on pesticides. The water rates for pump irrigation were inconsequential. The supply of inputs was irregular, thus a black market flourished, and the peasants who did not have direct access to the source of input supply were forced to pay two to three times more than the controlled rate. The rich peasants prospered at the cost of the small peasants and the economy was subsidizing their agricultural operation (Mannan, 1972; B.I.D.S. Surveys). Low priced fertilizer was also smuggled into India. In the post-liberation period, the government wanted to lower the subsidy rate for fertilizer. But against stiff resistance from the landed interest section, the government was forced to modify its policy.

Another area where the government has intervened on price fixing is the internal marketing of agricultural commodities. Government intervention comes through a system of rationing in the distribution of food grains. Since the internal production of rice and wheat is insufficient to meet the domestic demand, substantial import of rice and wheat is necessary. From the 1960's onwards under the U.S.P.L. - 480 Program, food grains have been imported. In the same period, the ratio of total imported rice and wheat to domestic production increased from about 7% in 1960-61 to about 25% in 1972-73 (Alamgir and Berlage, 1974; Falcon and Gotsch, 1966). The internally procured and imported food grains are distributed through ration shops, the

dealers of which are government appointed. The shops cover only four urban centres where people buy food grains at subsidized rates. This system facilitates a transfer of income from the agricultural sector to the urban sector, but no such corresponding system is extended to the rural areas except in extreme situations when some food grains are distributed through gratuitous rationing. The total effect of the system is a transfer of income from the agricultural sector to the urban sector; and it illustrates the trend that national politics is more geared to the needs of the more powerful groups in the urban areas, who have direct linkage to the rural rich, than to the rural or urban poor.

Thus we find that the I.R.D.P. programme, the cooperative venture, the pricing policies - all represent a firm basis for the landed agricultural lobby, at the local as well as the national level.

2.6 Power and Power Structure

We have seen how the land reform shaped the agrarian class relations and how the government policies towards rural development and pricing and procurement helped the rich peasants to consolidate power. In this section an attempt has been made to relate power and power structure to the rural economy. Emphasis has also been given to the opposition of interest between social categories. This is to pinpoint the contradiction in the peasantry because the peasantry is not an undifferentiated mass. In fact village society is stratified into classes (Betaille, 1969, 1972, 1974). Power springs from the control over the principal means of production: land.

The two basic features of Bangladesh rural society are: 1) absence of a substantial group of large landowners and 2) the low level of the absolute size of holding. The double colonial setting deformed the process of capital formation in the economy. Coupled with it, the government's various agricultural, pricing and procurement policies helped the peasant society to polarize and to stratify. At one end of the scale, the poor and middle peasants cling desparately to a fragment of land, and at the other end of the scale, the rich peasants thrive, accumulate land and the means of agricultural production. In this society land is capital. Land is scarce, but at the same time a vital resource. Its possession gives economic and political power.

> "First there are the economic and social processes by which families gain and lose land (purchasing, mortgaging and multiple inheritance); secondly the way in which families and groups obtain and defend titles to plots - e.g. through inheritance and bribery; and thirdly, the inevitable disputes which arise over boundaries, and the structure of their resolution. This 'absolute smallness in farm size' will render relative differences of even a minute scale quite significant - both as a source of disputes and as a political variable in their resolution" (Wood, 1974, pp.29-30).

Moreover, it is imperative to examine the rural power structure in the context of new forms of agricultural technology. The new technology has its impact upon the political structure, and upon the policy

formulation process about development itself. Thus the study of rural power structure must be related to the national institutions of power and the way power is exercised in the rural areas. It is a fact of history that the peasants of rural areas supported the anti-Ayub movement in 1969. Bertocci in his paper observed:

> "I know from several examples encountered in my fieldwork that local sons of fairly well-to-do farm families, attending a town high school, as well as the many students from the more remote areas who take up residence in 'villages' near the towns where their institutions are located (they serve as tutors to local children in exchange for room and board and are called 'lodging masters'), were often caught up in the maelstrom of national politics through affiliation with student arms of various parties. Thus, I am positing that during the anti-Ayub upsurge of 1969, part of the political communication which spread the movement to the countryside was achieved by the activities of students, who certainly contributed mightily to the fall of Ayub in any event working from Dacca city outward. Making contact with their peers in the smaller towns who were more closely linked with the rural areas, the student leaders of the anti-Ayub movement thus touched base with the peasantry by activating the communication potential of the natural social system of which market areas are the crucial part" (Bertocci, 1971, pp.32-33).

The significance of this point is that the peasantry is

not a homogeneous whole, its life is not identified with the village, it moves with the encapsulating society which includes the cities and the nature of the state. Rural political process is composed of these dimensions. They pinpoint the role of the peasantry in agrarian societies and its relation with the power structure (Wolf, 1969).

2.7 Government, Power and Politics

Liberation and after

The process of encapsulation has taken different shape after liberation because of the insertion of multiple circumstances of specific events, organisations and institutions in the national economy and politics. In the national liberation struggle against Pakistan every section and class of people was involved. It was a struggle of all, joined by all. Unitedly, all sections struggled against Pakistan, but within the liberation movement the military cadres of the Awami League struggled against all sections of the left for supremacy (Ali, 1975; Alavi, 1971).

After the emergence of Bangladesh, the clash between the Right and the Left has sharpened. The commandos of the Right are drawn mostly from among the Awami League students' wing.

> "When the Bangladesh Government gave a call to the Mukti Bahini to surrender their arms and deposit them with the Government, it was actually intended for the left radicals who have in their possession huge stocks of arms, snatched and captured. As the left radicals have not so far responded to this call,

> the Government is haunted by the spectre of another armed insurrection. Besides, armed clashes between the Mukti Bahini and the communist revolutionaries are not uncommon, especially in the countryside" (Frontier, 1972, p.5).

Again:

> "Of course, it is not so easy to liquidate the left radicals, who are operating in rural areas. There has been a lack of contact between the masses and the Mukti Bahini, a gap which has widened over the last nine months. The left radicals are taking full advantage of this communication gap to set up their activities among the peasants" (ibid., p.6).

Groups of armed youths sprang up in rural areas after the liberation. In the initial phase, they worked under the auspices and support of the central political force, the Awami League. The gangs are now emerging as an autonomous, armed force, obtaining property by seizure, establishing shops at rural markets and emerging as agents of the urban business interests in the rural areas. (This will be enlarged later). This force is aligned with the propertied class in the rural power structure; the difference is that the youths are armed and therefore have a pronounced effect on central politics. This armed force is another factor in the rural power and political structure. The armed youths in the rural areas are not under the thumb of the rich peasants. By being armed, they have the power to confiscate property and have emerged as a separate, independent force in the rural political structure.

The "existence and organization of a military social

stratum" (Gramsci, 1973) is significant. On the one hand, it takes the shape of "agrarian fascism", and on the other, confrontation led by the left. The armed gangs are accustomed to command "politically", not "economically". Following Gramsci, we can conclude:

> "its function consists in opposing 'politically' the attempts of the peasant farmer to ameliorate his existence - since any improvement in the relative position of the peasant would be catastrophic for his social position. The chronic poverty and prolonged labour of the peasant, with the degradation these bring, are a primordial necessity for it. This is the explanation for the immense energy it shows in resisting and counter-attacking whenever there is the least attempt at autonomous organization of peasant labour, or any peasant cultural movement which leaves the bounds of official religion. This social stratum finds its limits, and the reasons for its ultimate weakness, in its territorial dispersal and in the 'non-homogeneity' which is intimately connected to this dispersal. This explains some of its other characteristics too: its volubility, the multiplicity of ideological systems it follows, even the bizarre nature of the ideologies it sometimes follows. Its will is directed towards a specific end - but it is retarded, and usually requires a lengthy process before it can become politically and organizationally centralized. This process accelerates when the specific 'will' of this stratum coincides with the will and the immediate

> interests of the ruling class; not only that, but its 'military strength' then at once reveals itself, so that sometimes, when organized, it lays down the law to the ruling class, at least as far as the 'form' of solution is concerned, if not the content" (Gramsci, 1973, p. 213).

I have so far referred to the interconnections between the national institutions of power and the way power is exercised in the countryside. Along with the rich peasants, the armed youth are busy possessing the principal means of production: land. I have also analysed the impact of the technology and the new resources on the political structure and also the impact of the contemporary patterns of rural political dominance upon the policy formulation process of the government regarding development itself. I have examined the process of capital formation in the rural areas, the concentration of landholding and the opportunities for increasing agricultural productivity. These offer greater scope for investment in non-agricultural activities like manipulation of the market, possessing the trading infrastructure. Though the rich peasants are capable of branching into various non-agricultural activities, they remain as cultivators and are included in the subsidized programmes of agricultural development. All this points to the reinforcement of a rich peasant class. This class is in a position to withstand the weakening process of fragmentation through inheritance, because it has non-agricultural sources of income. This capital formation is the result of higher productivity of holdings and non-

agricultural economic activities.

In concluding this chapter I want to pinpoint to a major theme and one which I will re-examine at different points in the analysis which follows. This is the formation of capital in a colonial agrarian situation. This formation of capital produces differentiation of the peasantry within a capitalist framework. The specificity of this process is central to an evaluation of the political potential of the peasantry. The next chapter is about the social and economic base of the two villages selected for special study. This will provide the necessary framework to examine in depth the differentiation process.

Chapter III : Village Social Structure

This chapter is about the ecology of the area and the social structure of two villages. The important determinants of the social structure are land ownership and land relations. These shape the distribution of power, status and influence. The pattern of landownership influences the composition of the household, reflects the style of life, and determines the status of the person and of the household in the social organisation of the rural area.

3.1 Ecology

Savar is one of the police stations of Dacca district. The study area is east of the police station, located on longitude 90°15' East and latitude 23°50' North, and consists of two villages. Dacca, the capital, is thirty miles to the south and the Asian Highway, the main road, is six miles west. The road approaching the study area is unpaved. The two villages are on the bank of the river Turag, a swift torrent. Savar, eight miles to west of the study area, is a large trading centre with three banks, a university, a telephone exchange and a cinema. Also in Savar are the headquarters of the paramilitary force, Rakhi Bahini, and a government-run dairy farm. Six miles to the east of the study area is Tongi, an important industrial estate, but there is no road linking them. During the rainy season, a boat runs and people make the three-hour journey. For the rest of the year, the two are separated by a large swamp.

A few small hillocks are dotted over the area.

These are intersected by gently sloping depressions, known locally as bydes . The high land is sparsely covered with trees, the principal ones being the tall and sturdy gajari and sal . The air smells of sal, dust, bark, mud and twigs. The settlements are generally located on the highlands. The bydes form the agricultural land. The average elevation of the hillocks and the irregular depressions range from 20 to 25 feet above sea level for the former and 10 to 15 feet for the latter.

Part of the area is flooded during the rainy season. With the rain comes flooding and each year the bydes are covered by water. During the monsoons, the area is under high wind, driving rain, racing clouds, with sudden bright sunbursts on hill patches and mud-built houses. The high lands are never flooded.

The area is part of the Pleistocene terrace of Madhupur Tract. The levelled high lands are composed of laterite soil. The bydes are clayey, deficient in nitrogen, organic matter, phospherous and lime, but relatively rich in iron and aluminium. The soils are highly aggregated and have a high phosphate fixing capacity.

The climate of the area is conditioned by the general tropical monsoon pattern of the Dacca district. The mean summer temperature is 84°F and the winter season 64°F. The summer temperature sometimes rises to 108°F and may drop in winter to as low as 45°F. The air contains a high degree of humidity, especially between May and September. The four winter months, from November to February, are dry and bracing, with an average rainfall of not more than 3" throughout the period. The summer months from

March to June coincide with the rainy season, with July and August as the monsoon months of heaviest rain (11"). The average annual rainfall of the area is 69.64". The pre-monsoon period is marked by 'nor westers', thunderstorms, lightning and heavy rain. The peasants then wait and watch for storms. And the storms bring maddening wind, dust, lightning and disaster; trees are uprooted and houses are torn down.

Although agriculture is the main occupation, croplands make up only 35% of the total land area. This phenomenon is explained by the regions' physical aspects. Next to crops, horticulture plays the most important role in land use. The area is noted for its jackfruit gardens which cover the highlands but are usually to be found adjacent to settlements. Besides croplands and horticulture, in the non-flooded areas grasslands are to be found. Apart from grazing, grass is used as a thatching material for the construction of houses by poor peasants. The agricultural implements in use are langol, langra, mai, itamugur, nirani, kastay, kodal and joal. These are made of wood or iron, or both, and are available in the local hats or bazaars. Langol is used for cultivating; langra for weeding or thinning; mai for levelling; itamugur for breaking up the soil; nirani for weeding the grass; kastay for harvesting; kodal for binding the ail or sub-dividing the land; and joal as a yoke for bullocks. Bullocks are used for ploughing, although poor peasants generally use cows rather than bullocks. It takes six hours to plough one pakhi (33 decimals) of land by a bullock-drawn plough. Cow-dung is the common fertilizer.

The peasants would prefer to use chemical fertilizers but they are difficult to obtain.

Rice, sugar-cane and jute form the principal agricultural crops of the area. The cultivation of cane is gaining momentum as a cash crop with multi-purpose utilities. Apart from its food content, it is used as a thatching material and as fodder for cattle. The increasing cultivation of cane is at the expense of jack-fruit trees. The growing of jute is on the decline, since its market value is dwindling. Of the rice grown, Aman, Aus, Boro and Irri are the main varieties. Aus is planted in March and April and harvested in July and August. The yield per acre is low, ranging from 15 to 20 maunds (where one maund is equivalent to 82.28 lbs.). Aman is sown in March and April, then transplanted in August and harvested in November and December. The yield per acre is 30 maunds. Irri is sown in November and harvested in April. Boro is grown near the riverside. It is transplanted in January/ February and harvested in April. The yield per acre is 25 to 30 maunds. Sugar-cane is planted in March and April and cut in September and October.

Mustard, grain and musur pulse are the important winter crops in the region. A large proportion of land is used to cultivate various kinds of vegetable: potato, tomato, brinjal, pumpkin, garlic, onion, pepper, beans, etc. They are grown for commercial purposes, with many peasants dependent upon them for a living. The vegetables are sold to the Savar bazaar where intermediaries buy them for the Dacca market. Interculture is a common practice. Aus, Aman, cown (paddy) and til (mustard) are

generally cultivated in the same plot during the summer season. In the winter season, tisi (mustard) is sown in the same plot as grain, while Aman is also extensively grown with pulses during the winter. There is one deep tube well in the area under study.

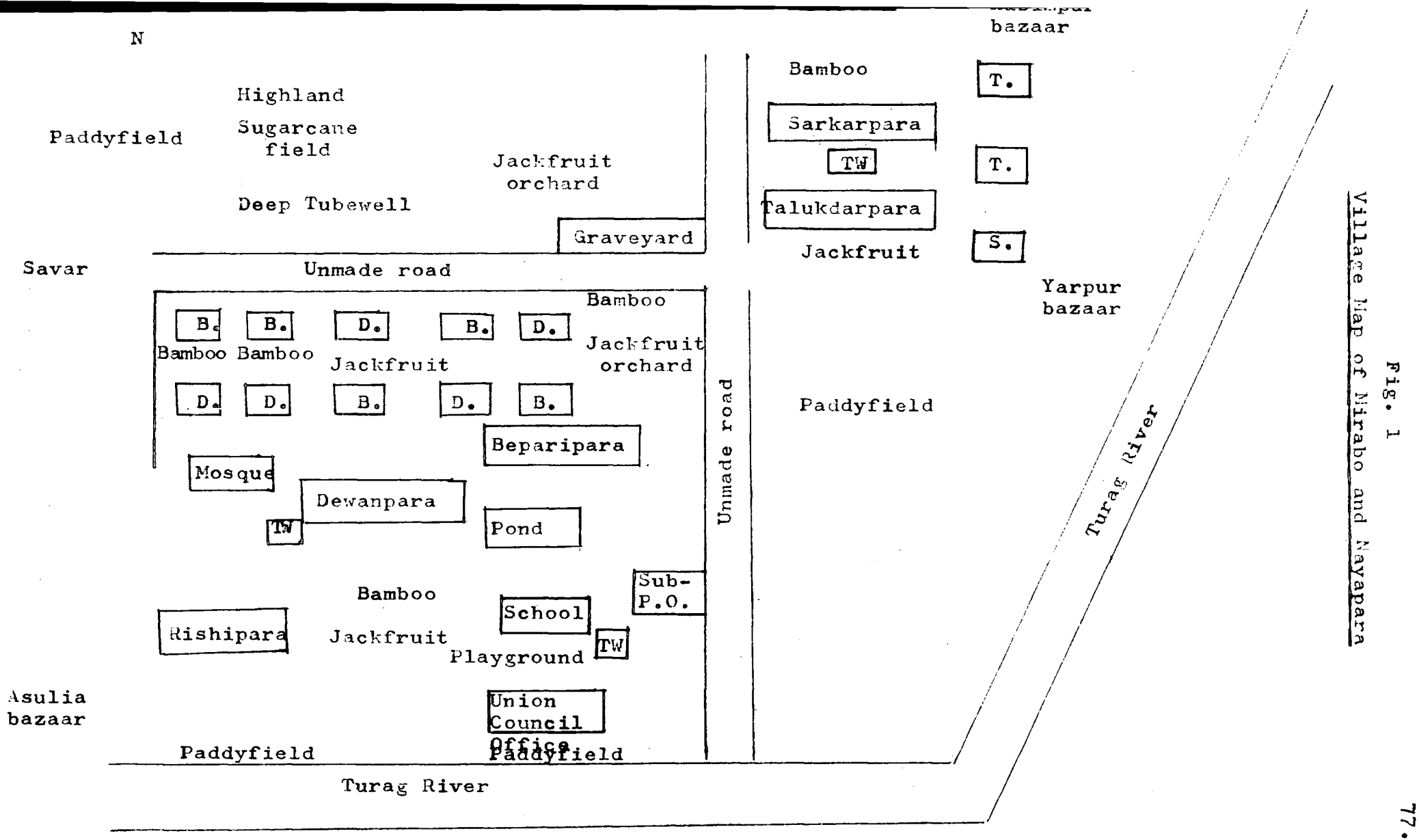
3.2 The villages of Mirabo and Nayapara

Mirabo and Nayapara form a twin village. They are hidden among the gentle slopes of the Bawal forest range, standing on the northern bank of the river Turag as it flows from east to west. The villages are partially on high land and partially on low land.

The easiest method of getting to the village is to take a bus from Dacca to Savar and from there to walk eastwards. Trees greet the eyes - among them are jack-fruit, mango, sal and bamboo. One or two bullock carts will be encountered on the unmade road, carrying gur (treacle) to Savar bazaar. Mirabo lies on both sides of the unmade road, leading to Nayapara. Paths wind up to the village and, whereas Nayapara lies in clusters, Mirabo is set out in rows. Figure 1 shows the layout of the twin villages.

3.3 Local Market Centres

The nearest hat or market is at Yarpur, one mile to the east of Mirabo and Nayapara. This is held on Thursdays and Saturdays each week. The weekly market in Asulia, three miles to the south, meets on Wednesdays. Four miles to the north, on the bank of the river Turag, lies Kasimpur, whose weekly hat is held each Monday. Kasimpur is one of the oldest market places in the area,



B. = Bepari S. = Sarkar T.W. = Tubewell
D. = Dewan T. = Talukdar

Fig. 1
Village Map of Nirabo and Nayapara

since it was the home of the Zamindars. Also located in Kasimpur is a government-run agricultural estate. This is the hub of the cooperative activities of this area. Savar, eight miles west of Mirabo, is the lowest point of the administrative network. The police station, the agricultural development corporation office and banks are centred in Savar. Agricultural produce mainly rice, jute, vegetables, treacle; earthen and aluminium utensils, clothing (lungi and saree) are sold in these markets. The markets perform multifarious functions in the socio-economic and political life of the area. The importance of the market and its multifarious uses will be elaborated later.

The twin village of Mirabo-Nayapara is under the Yarpur Union Council.[1] The Union Council office is in Mirabo, which also contains a secondary school, whose students are affiliated to the various national student organizations, and a sub-post office. There are two agricultural cooperatives in Mirabo and one in Nayapara, run under the direction of the Kasimpur agricultural estate. Two tube wells for drinking water have been sunk in Mirabo and one in Nayapara. Mirabo has a deep tube well for irrigation.

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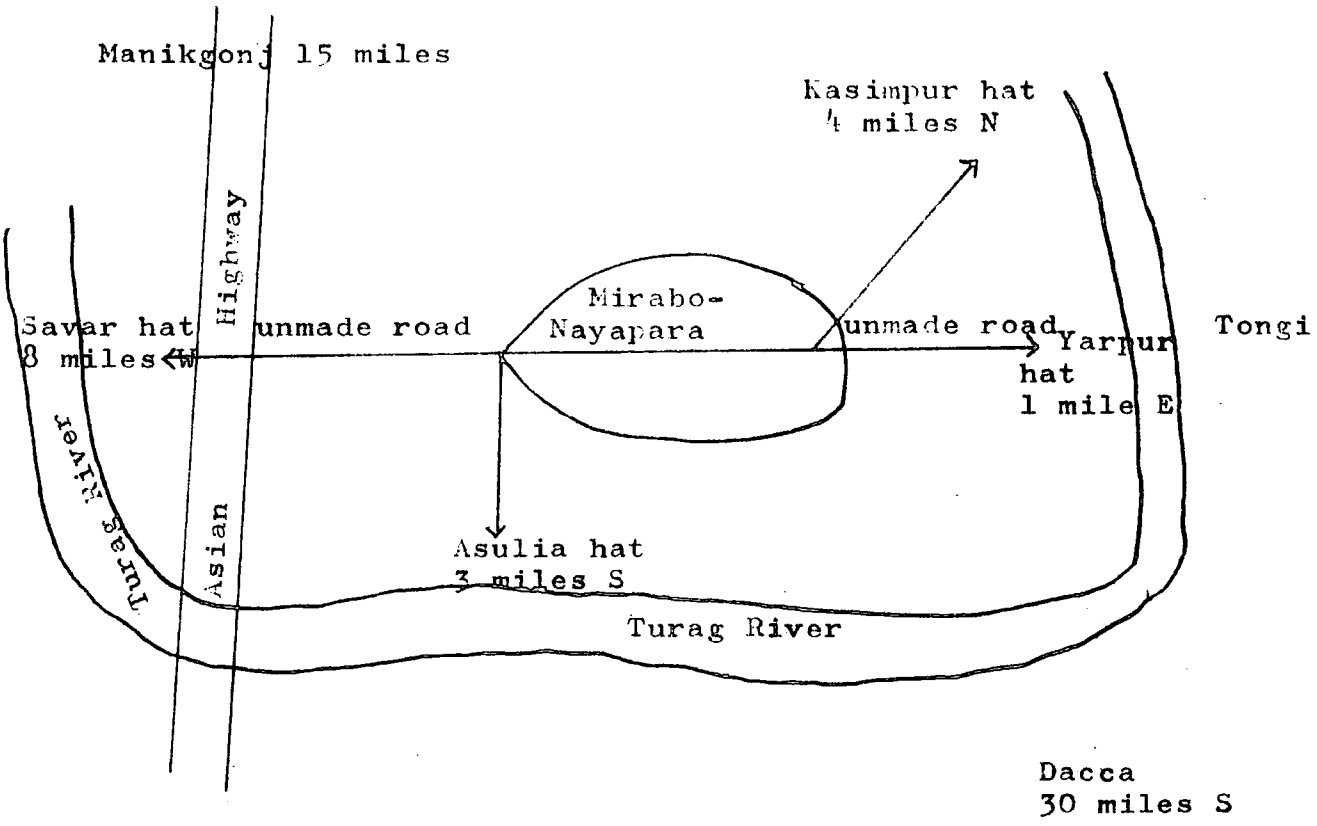
1. The Union Council is the bottom rung of Local Government. All members are directly elected by universal adult franchise. The Chairman is to be elected by the members of the Council. The average income of a Union Council is about Tk 13,000. "The main part of the income comes from taxes on land and buildings, chaukidar rates (village police, B.K.J.) and taxes on trade and vehicles" (Sobhan, 1968, p. 78).

Figure 2 : Location of nearby market centres



3.4 Families

Mirabo was originally settled by two families, known as Dewan and Beparí, and its present population is largely descended from these. Jadu Fakir (fakir means mendicant), the founder of the Dewan family, was the latial or muscle man of the Zamindars of Kasimpur. He came from the east, from Narsingdi, about one hundred years ago, with his wife. Mirabo was part of the estate of Kasimpur; it was at that time a dense forest and a hideout for thieves. Jadu obtained permission from the zamindars to settle down in Mirabo. He then brought three of his brothers from Narsingdi. Their parental land was small, and was washed away by the river. The Zamindars wanted to colonize the forest land and to

control the robbers. So they gave permission to the four brothers to settle permanently and to cultivate the land. Land was still abundant and the Zamindars needed manpower to make it cultivable. In the course of time, Jadu, the eldest brother, became a latial of the Zamindars, acquired land partly as a gift in return for his services and partly taken by force. By these means, he became the most prominent man in the village and the wealthiest of the brothers. He then assumed the title of Dewan, a position in the revenue collection system of the Imperial Mughals. Jadu Fakir became Jadu Dewan and his brothers also changed their name. The family thus came to be known as Dewan Bangsho (lineage), in accordance with the Bangladesh proverb which states: "Last year I was a jola (weaver), this year I have become a sheikh, and if next year's crops are good, I shall be a syed". The current Chairman of the Union Council, Boro Dewan, is the present head of the Dewan family.

The Bepari family had its origins in trade (the word bepar means trade). Today, they are engaged in both trade and agriculture. Thus in Mirabo, the titles associated with lineages and homesteads are connected either with (a) an occupation (Bepari) or (b) a high status title (Dewan). In the case of a high status title, the origin is dubious; the Dewans adopted the title to legitimize their landed wealth. But there is a distinction between long-standing and recently acquired titles; some local people, especially the older ones, say that the Dewans are dak (so-called), not ashol (original). In recent Bengali usage bepari stands for

petty trader. However, the social prestige of petty trade is not great, and this explains why the young members of the Bepari lineage are somewhat reluctant to use "Bepari" as a patronym. Kasem, a member of the Bepari family, who is now a school teacher in the Mirabo High School, uses "Mia" as a patronym in place of "Bepari". Mia is a high-status title, usually associated with landed aristocracy. The village people accept this change, because of his education and his status as a school teacher. He has in effect changed his social standing. Though he stays in the bepari para, his household is known as master saber bari (household of the master). Hence Bepari indicates low status and low class ranking,[1] although the old still use it as a patronym. They say: "Why should we forego the title? Our fathers used this title. There is nothing wrong in a particular occupation." Thus, a father may be known as Abdur Rahman Bepari; but his son may prefer to be known as Abdus Sobhan, deleting Bepari as a title. A person born into a family with or without titles will use a title depending on his own personal inclination, the glamour of the status title or on his personal fortune. In the course of time, the glamour of a particular title may become thin; and even the poorer members of a particular lineage sometimes no longer claim it. Thus, many members of the Dewan lineage no longer use Dewan as a patronym. They simply say: "What do we gain by it?" Although originally there was no social or

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1. Bertocci's field experience corroborates this. See Bertocci, 1972, pp. 28-51.

affinal relations between the Dewan and Bepari families, since the Beparis were considered to be of lower social standing, they are now becoming closer and marriages take place between them.

In Nayapara, the prominent families are Sarkar and Talukdar. As in the case of the Dewans, the Sarkar family was founded by one of the latials of the Kasimpur Zamindars. This position enabled him to gain prominence and acquire land. He assumed the title of Sarkar (governor or agent of the government/landlord). The Talukdar family ancestor was a money lender. Through his money lending activities, he acquired land and assumed the title of Talukdar (landlord of a taluk or revenue division of the pre-British period).

The facts presented above indicate that neither family belongs to a long line of aristocratic ancestors. Social stratification, as far as status is concerned, is not rigid, and mobility between high and low status groups has also taken place. Ownership of property is individual, not corporate or communal. According to Muslim law, inheritance is partible; property must be divided equally among all male members of the family, with a share to all female members half that received by males. Thus property is fragmented over time into smaller and smaller shares, and an individual's holding is diminished unless land is consistently accumulated. This accumulation points to the existence of fierce struggles in an economy essentially based on scarcity. It is only accumulation that protects an individual's wealth. At the same time, other families of poor economic standing or low

status may be rising, and if they are successful they may branch out into other activities, engage in money lending, mortgaging land, or getting money from outside from a member who has already become successful in town. It is wealth that gives status; but, it is a fierce struggle to maintain the status within the framework of an agricultural economy. Thus, we find in the system a regular rise and fall of individual families, a flexible system of social stratification and some degree of social mobility. The assignment of status and the acquisition of titles are linked with wealth, with land, and hence are the key base for power.

In Mirabo, there is also a small settlement consisting of only two households known as Rishipara composed of landless Hindu untouchables, whose principal occupation is curing leather.

3.5 Social Groupings

As in any village in Bangladesh, social groupings in Mirabo and Nayapara begin at their most basic level with bari. Bari is the peasant homestead, the residential locus of a patrilateral kin group (gusthi) and any matrilateral and/or affinal relatives staying for various reasons with the patri-group. The word bari evokes the notion of a dwelling, the residence of a particular family - for example, Dewan bari, Sarkar bari, etc. Again, bari connotes status, occupation or a particular social level. For instance, the bari of Boro Dewan is known as chairmaner bari (dwelling of the Chairman). Bari also evokes the image of the behaviour pattern of the important members of the family, past or present. Since

the present head of the Sarkar family of Nayapara has become a religious figure, his home is known as peer bari. So bari does not merely mean a household; it also expresses the manners of men and women, the way they live and how they are related to the larger community.

Within bari or homestead is ghor, a house, room or shelter. Ghor is composed of a man's family of procreation; it is the area in which he lives with his paribar, or immediate family. This social unit is also called chula (hearth, oven) as well as khana (meal). Chula implies a cooking group, khana an eating group. So a man lives in his ghor with his paribar, his nearest and dearest, with whom he cooks his food (chula) and shares it (khana). His membership of the bari or homestead is by birth or marriage.

Bari is the minimal grouping of rural society. The next level is known as para, where several homesteads cluster together in mutual proximity. Para is a neighbourhood or quarter. The name of a para depends either on status or on occupation, as in Dewanpara and Beparipara, or on location, as in Uttor (north) para, or Pub (east) para. In times of new settlements, the para is normally known on the basis of location. The original settlement is known on the basis of status or occupation. Whereas in the original settlement the homesteads of a particular lineage cluster together, in a new settlement the homesteads of different lineages may be grouped together. At present, the para composition is changing

because of population pressure and lineage fission. A study of the settlement pattern of Mirabo and Nayapara makes clear that kin group segments are dispersed beyond immediate para localities. Mirabo has three original para: Dewanpara, Beparipara and Rishipara; Nayapara has two: Sarkarpara and Talukdarpara. Of these, Dewanpara and Sarkarpara have dispersed as a result of property divisions and resettlement over time. In Mirabo, the new paras are known as Uttorpara and Pachimpara (west) and in Nayapara they are known as Pubpara and Uttorpara. (See figure 1)

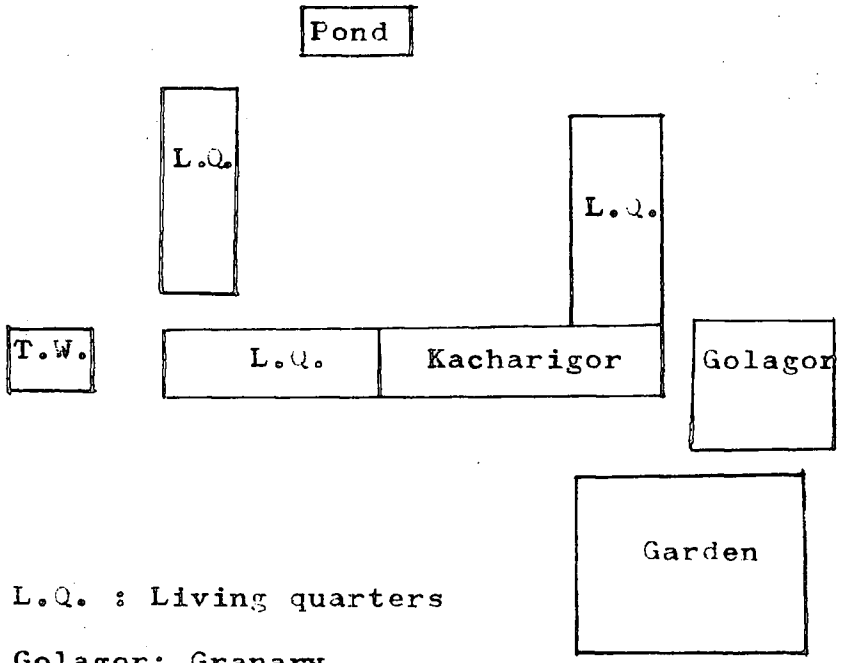
3.5.1 Descent

Descent in Bangladesh Muslim peasant society is patrilineal. But only the membership of the kingroup is transmitted along the male line, not the inheritance of property. As regards property, Islamic law entitles women to inherit and transmit to their children a share half the size that received by men. I shall describe later on the pattern of inheritance.

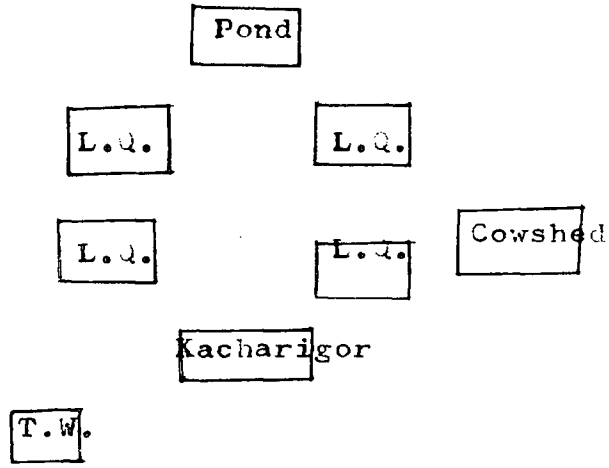
This is a male-dominated rural society. Women remain relatively in the background. In the family, the husband and father is the master. He controls property. He represents the household in its dealings with the outside world. He makes contracts, takes decisions. Within the house the women perform normal domestic duties; but they are not restricted to within the confines of the house. The wives of the poor peasants often work as domestic help or 'hired labour' during the harvesting season in the homesteads of richer families.

The children belong to pitrikul (patrilineage).

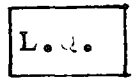
1. Boro Dewan's household



2. Sarkar's household



3. Inam Ali Bepari's household



L.Q. : Living quarters

Golagor: Granary

T.W.: Tube well

Kacharigor: Quarter for entertaining guest

Household structure reflects the life-style, the status of the person and of the household. In the case of 1 and 2 we find living quarter, granary, separate quarter for entertaining guests, pond, tubewell etc. In the case of 3 we find only the living quarter.

Figure 3 : Three households of different composition and economic status

But they have a special relationship with matrikul (mother's parents and her siblings). A daughter has rights in her parental properties and a wife has rights in her husband's properties after his death. In both cases, either in her natal or in her marital home she can transfer rights to her children. In this sense then she is not completely dependent on her husband.

Respect for the father and the father's father, and solidarity between brothers are two common features of the descent system. Respect for one's father is indicated by name avoidance. This is also observed by the wife and the son's wife. A grown-up son usually refers to his father as Boro Mia (Big Man). A strong tie of affection and loyalty binds father and son, though the relation between them is formal. Relations with the father's father is more intimate and casual; whereas trust is the operational basis between brothers. Some recognition of primogeniture is evident. There is a distinction between boro mia (big man) and choto mia(young man). Here the elder brother is referred as boro mia bhai (big brother) and the younger brother as choto mia bhai (young brother). Though each brother sets up a separate domestic unit (chula) upon marriage, and properties are divided between brothers after the death of the father, brothers normally show deference to boro mia bhai and do not oppose one another in public. But in certain cases recognition of primogeniture is ruled out in favour of competence and personal qualities. All these aspects, of course, function in respect of conduct and solidarity within the domestic unit.

3.5.2 Marriage

In Mirabo and Nayapara marriages are usually arranged by elder persons. They are the elders of the bari or of the para. The two young people are not supposed to know or to have seen one another. Marriages are often arranged between distant kin or within a close geographical proximity. Kingroups are broadly divided into two categories: gusti (patrilineal kin group) and attiyo (this includes patrilateral, matrilateral and affinal kin). Attiyo is of two kinds: ghanisto attiyo (close kinsmen) or dur shomporkar attiyo (distant kinsmen). With ghanisto attiyo (close kinsmen) one maintains social and ritual relations; they are the persons to whom one turns for economic and political assistance. With dur shomporkar attiyo one recognises and traces relations only when the occasion requires it. Generally speaking two generations are the points of reference in the case of close relations and three to four generations are the cut off points in the case of distant relations. Marriages in Mirabo and Nayapara are often contracted with distant kinsmen. The general preference is to arrange a marriage with those families with whom the parties are not allied. One does not want to marry within the gusti or ghanisto attiyo because of existing ties of obligation.

There are no rules of village endogamy in Mirabo and Nayapara. Wives generally come from adjacent villages or within walking distance of between two to three miles. When a man seeks a wife for his son it becomes common knowledge. In an arranged marriage one needs information

about the age of the girl, whether she has fair complexion, whether her family standing is good, whether she reads the koran, whether she helps the mother to run the household.

Mohr is the basis of the marriage contract. According to the Islamic law, the groom is required to pay or pledge a set sum to the bride at the time of the marriage. In Mirabo and Nayapara the Mohr is not paid in full at the time of the wedding. Neither is it paid in instalments later on. It is paid only if the husband divorces his wife. In fact a portion of the mohr is paid at the time of the wedding in the form of clothing and jewellery. The cost of the items is settled before the marriage between the two families. Village people consider the mohr as a leash to restrain a husband from divorcing his wife. The peasants of low economic circumstances in Mirabo and Nayapara settle the mohr usually at about Taka 1000 to Taka 2000. Rich peasant families settle the sum at about Taka 15,000 to Taka 20,000. It is also observed that in the same lineage while a rich subgroup settles mohr between Taka 15,000 to Taka 20,000, a poor sub-group settles it modestly. The payment or pledge of a big sum at the wedding denotes one's economic position. It is significant that there is considerable variation regarding the fixing of the mohr at the time of the marraige in the same lineage. It reflects the marriage pattern and type of kinship relation. (This is elaborated in section 3.9).

3.5.3. Inheritance

Inheritance in Bangladesh peasant society is based

on Islamic law. The Islamic law 'provides for fixed shares which take precedence over the succession of the next of kin to the residue of the estate' (Schacht, 1964). After the clearance of the debts of the deceased, the surviving spouse and mother receive fixed shares. The rest is divided among the sons and daughters. A daughter receives a share half the size of a son. The grandsons are disinherited if their father dies before their grandfather. The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance has repealed this article and provided that grandsons should receive a share of the inheritance. According to Islamic law a pre-deceased heir is not represented by his descendant. This disinherits grandson if his father dies before his grandfather. Son is the heir of his father, as he owned no land at the time of his death, there would be nothing for son to inherit.

In Bangladesh peasant society, a woman inherits from her father's property holding group. In Mirabo and Nayapara the property consists mainly of land, and women generally do not claim their shares. They leave their shares to their brothers, and the brothers divide them equally. This produces good relations between brothers and sisters. This also provides security for a woman if her husband dies or divorces her or if she finds herself in an intolerable situation in the home of her husband. She could come and live with the brothers.

A daughter inherits property if there are no sons. In the case of an unmarried daughter a husband may be brought in for the girl as ghor jamai (son-in-law of the house). The position of a man living as ghor jamai is

sometimes unenviable. He is open to ridicule because he is under the control of his wife or his wife's kin. In Mirabo there is one ghor jamai. The husband is a poor peasant from a neighbouring village. He was brought in to marry the girl. Generally men do not like the idea of becoming ghor jamai except when forced to by extreme poverty. In the case of ghor jamai, the ownership of land does not pass to the husband. It is retained by the wife.

Married sons live in their father's household. After the father's death they usually divide the property up and establish separate households (chula). This division does not usually mean a physical move. The separate families still live under the same house (ghor), in the same cluster of dwellings (bari) as they did during the father's life time.

The pattern of inheritance has changed somewhat these days. The average peasant inherits land but, as land is the main source of income, land tends to get fragmented in a subsistence-based family. However, the case of the rich peasant is different. Land is not his only source of income. He is capable of branching out into non-agricultural investment and he has also the capacity to establish sons in other forms of employment. All these have a distinct impact on the pattern of inheritance. In the case of a rich peasant family, land gets seldom fragmented on the death of the father, because of the non-agricultural investments and different occupations of the sons. While the subsistence-based family moves towards disintegration as a land holding unit, the

position of the rich peasant family becomes more stable. The pattern of inheritance operates variously in the two types of families because of the differential opportunities for the accumulation of capital and access to resources.

3.5.4. The Honour System

In this society izzat (honour) of a person depends on certain factors: 1. whether he can provide his family with food (kwa-pora), 2. whether he can maintain the privacy of women (purdah), 3. whether he has a separate room to entertain guests (kacharigher), 4. whether his womenfolk bathe in others pond or not. The qualities are evaluated in terms of the polar opposites of izzat (honour) and lajja (shame). A man of honour (izzatban manus) is he who can maintain all these. It is a matter of great shame (lajjar bishoye) if he fails to do so; and failure means loss of social respect.

Honour, in this sense, is thus a matter of economic wellbeing. It is a test of a peasant's qualification to earn respect from others. I asked one informant about this. He replied "if I have a good harvest, I will dig a pond (pukur) or construct a Kacharighor." I asked another informant about sending wives as domestic help or 'hired labour' during the harvest seasons to the homesteads of the rich peasants. His reactions were sharp: "It concerns izzat of a household. Poor peasants do not send their wives gladly. They are forced to do this. The feeding of stomachs covers lajja (shame). I asked a third informant about the basis of selection of a prospective husband. He told me that the prime concern

is whether the prospective husband can provide food for the wife (kawate - porate pare kina). Thus, in Mirabo and Nayapara, izzat is related to wealth and possession of land. Though the concepts of honour and shame relate to particular actions, they express the socio-economic situation of the person concerned. A person's izzat involves land and wealth. His worth depends on his ability to maintain the izzat of his family. If he fails he will become the subject of common gossip. Hence, the reality of economic well-being is the index of honour or its opposite. Thus, honour is as important as land. Peasants' quarrels[1] over infinitesimally small bits of land is indicative of their defending their honour. The main method used is of initiating quarrels or litigations. A man is required to defend his honour, if he is not, he will suffer permanent loss of respect.

If one gets money or property by disreputable means he lacks honour and this affects the extent of his status. For example, the third son of the Peer Sarkar family had illicit relations with a wife of a poor peasant of Nayapara. The husband had accepted the situation; and, in return he received money occasionally and obtained land for share cropping. But he was openly ridiculed in the village. It was commonly said about him that 'he may be maldar (wealthy), but he is a vera (sheep). He is a man who rents out his wife'. A second instance is that of a cattle thief. Cattle stealing is a

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1. Bertocci in his field study reports on these lengthy and acrimonious quarrels.

crime in the eyes of the peasants. Mirash Talukdar is a rich peasant of Nayapara. There is a rumour that much of Mirash Talukdar's affluence derives from his connections with cattle thieves. In the village he is known as goru chor (cattle thief); and the day labourers (kamla) who go to work in his fields jokingly say: "Today we work for the goru chor". This reference expresses contempt, but contempt in itself does not lead to complete social avoidance. In a society of scarcity this is not possible; for the rich peasants get grudging respect and preferential treatment, as we will see in the functioning of Samaj.

3.5.5. Samaj

The members of both villages belong to a Samaj (little community). Samaj is extensive in character and different from kin groups. In Samaj individuals are involved inter-actionally and ritually. All the villagers constitute a Samaj, and through Samaj they perform certain ritual ceremonies such as religious celebrations or marriages, or try to regulate the behaviour pattern of the villagers (for example, controlling behaviour during the month of Ramadhan). Then again each para has its own Samaj and within each para the rich peasants have their own Samaj separate from that of the poor peasants. The para-based Samaj cross-cut; for instance, the rich peasants of para A form Samaj with the rich peasants of para B, so also do the poor peasants. In Samaj of the entire village, the villagers may discuss the dates of namaj (prayers) of the two annual Eids. In Samaj of the para, they may discuss whom to invite in connection with a circumcision ceremony or how and when to hold poush parban (crop-gathering festival). Samaj also has another

function, that of mediation, particularly in cases of conflict. Mediation is carried out through a bicher soba composed of members of different para (to be discussed in the next section). Thus Samaj is an informal organization, while bicher soba is more formal. While everyone is a member of Samaj, be it village-based or para-based, membership of bicher soba is restricted. Yet anyone can present a case before bicher soba. Samaj can be described as a way of behaving and doing things on certain occasions together.

In this context it is worthwhile to briefly discuss Bertocci's (1972, pp. 29-31) field experience. Bertocci carried out his fieldwork in the villages of Hajipur and Tinpara, in Comilla district in the eastern part of Bangladesh. Here he observed Samaj broader than the village. According to him, Samaj is a "multi-village political unit" based on Sardars (influential persons of high lineage) and reyais (proteges). Within the village, reyais are loyal to one or other of several sardars. Outside the village, Samaj acts as a "multi-village political unit" and contributes "to the formation of wider, territorially extensive community organizations", and sardars act as "representatives in most cases of the dominant lineages in their respective bailiwicks". In the context of Mirabo and Nayapara, I did not observe a Samaj as described by Bertocci. Here the village constitutes Samaj and within the village Samaj there are different para-based Samaj and those based on different social categories. Here again neither the village nor the para Samaj is based on sardars and reyais. The village people say: everyone who belongs to the village is a member of Samaj and everyone is

equal. Samaj in Mirabo and Nayapara does not function as a "multi-village political unit". Political activity here is carried out either through the administrative structure (union council, cooperatives, etc.) or through various national political parties or Krisak Samity, both of which I will cover later.

In Samaj of Mirabo and Nayapara one is said to be equal - there are no restrictions on commensality. High status is accorded to men of position or of influence, such as Boro Dewan or Inam Ali Bepari (one is wealthy, the Chairman of the Union Council and the other is poor, the Secretary of Krisak Samity), but it is not based on high lineages (as described by Bertocci) or on hierarchy of castes in the sense of ritual pollution, associated purification rites or dietary restrictions. If we "see the event as occurring within a structure and perceive structures through events" (Godelier, 1972, p. 246), then possibly we can understand the working of Samaj as a structure and the events as they occur within it.

Although one is equal in Samaj, economic stratification has a bearing on its functioning. The economic structure and the pattern of all alignments within it are shaped by land ownership and land relations. For our purposes, we can divide the village population into four categories: rich, middle, poor and landless peasants. Rich peasants own large amounts of land. They employ wage labourers and/or sharecroppers. Middle peasants cultivate their own land. Ideally, they neither employ wage labourers nor have economic dependents whom they use as sharecroppers. Poor peasants own little land, they work as wage labourers and are economically dependent on the rich peasants or the middle peasants for a livelihood. In this classification

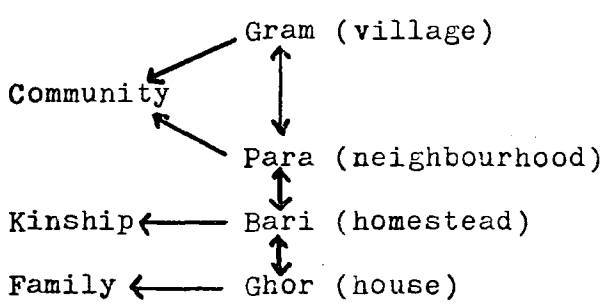
we see the economic dependence of the poor peasants and the landless on the rich peasants and their economic domination. The middle peasants, who in practice own less than 10 bigha, must supplement their incomes by working for others; those who own larger holdings tend to employ seasonal labour to assist with the harvest. We see a situation, then, where a set of people (rich peasants, poor peasants and landless labourers) are linked through "patron-client" type (dominating and dominated) relationships.

Another complexity arises in the functioning of Samaj when some households of the same lineage belong to one economic category and other households belong to a different category. In such cases the affluent households form their own Samaj and the poor households form theirs. These different Samaj operate within the larger Samaj of the village. Samaj organisation and Samaj ideology are weak in the case of the poor peasants, share-croppers and labourers. They do not have authority to enforce decisions for the village as a whole. For example, it is customary to fast during the month of Ramadhan, yet Boro Dewan neither fasts nor performs namaj as a good Muslim. An attempt was made years ago to ostracise him (ek ghore kora). Accordingly, a meeting (baitok)of the Samaj was convened by Peer Sarkar of Nayapara. Sarkars are rich peasants; the head of their household has become a Peer (religious person). The baitok ended in fiasco. Many of the peasants did not want to offend Boro Dewan. They simply said: "It is his business. If he does not keep the fast or perform namaj, Allah will take care of him." On the other hand, the rich peasants have the prerogative to enforce decisions because they can exercise effective economic control. Three years ago Rahim Ali, a poor peasant, violated a village widow.

Boro Dewan convened a Baitok of Samaj, prescribed the punishment of twenty lashes, had the man's head shaved and made him lick cow dung in the presence of his male and female folk of the village. Samaj decisions are seldom binding on rich peasants, however, as they compete to establish positions of power and authority. Their principal strength is derived not from Samaj membership but from economic power. Rich peasants, therefore, do not depend upon Samaj for power and authority. Though Samaj is based on equality, a structure of dominance gradually emerges within it from the unevenly developed bases of other social structures: the economic and political structures. Samaj thus functions within different types of social structure (economic, political, administrative) and all possible combinations of these play a strategic role in the organization of Samaj. On ancther plane, Mirabo and Nayapara belong to Savar mouza (a revenue unit), and as a political administrative unit, they form part of Yarpur Union Council under Savar thana.

Figure 4 : Social Grouping

1.



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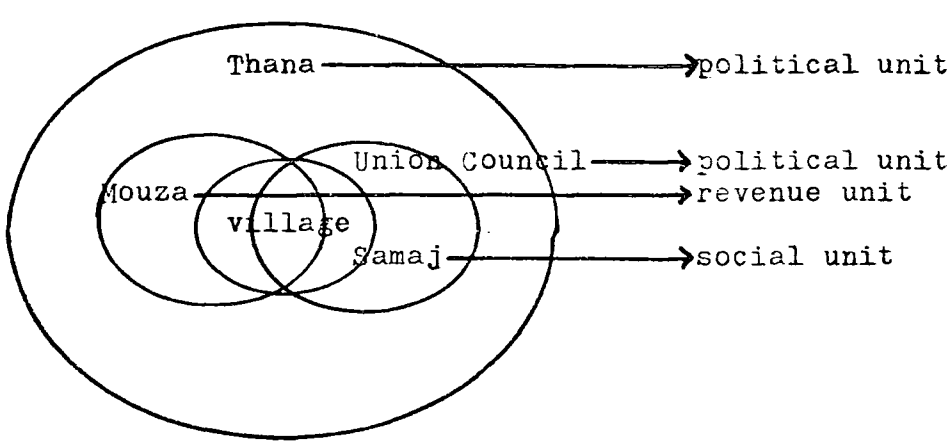

3.6 Social Control

The primary organ of social control in Mirabo and Nayapara is a bicher soba - a dispute settlement or mediation council. All adult villagers, both male and female, are entitled to bring grievances before the council. Membership of the bicher council depends upon wielding rural power, on property, on popularity and support by the rural masses, and lastly, on education. Members are known as matabbor (headmen or spokesmen). The posts are not hereditary nor are the members appointed. The process of selection appears natural and is mostly based on affluence. In each para, as someone becomes affluent and influential, he automatically becomes the spokesman for the para. Previously, in order to legitimize his status, he used to give a feast to other matabbors of the Samaj. In Mirabo and Nayapara this custom is less dominant these days. Instead of giving a feast to other matabbors, the matabbor usually entertains the members of the para on special occasions. He is now a man of wealth and prestige and his influence over other structures (political, economic, official) are recognized. An important aspect of bicher soba is that various matabbors are structurally similar in that they represent a similar social base, though this does not always hold true. In bicher soba, for example, the matabbors are sometimes divided on matters of mediation. Such cases reflect the conflicts of interest among the matabbors. Interest arises out of retaining or losing a degree of control over the members of the para. Sometimes bicher soba reflects polarization within the village society, as

described later, in the case of Tobarak Hossain or in that of the wheat theft. Most domestic disputes are settled in a bicher soba. Generally, villagers are reluctant to take matters to a civil court as proceedings are expensive and time consuming.

At present in Mirabo and Nayapara there are eight matabbors. Among them are Boro Dewan, the most influential and affluent member in the village, and Chairman of the Union Council; Majed Sarkar, head of the Sarkar family, who earned his membership through wealth; Nazir Dewan, a middle peasant, who became a member because of his popularity and ability to speak well; Kasem Mia, whose membership derives from his educated status as school teacher; Daroga Ali Talukdar, head of the Talukdar family, who became a member on the basis of his affluence; Inam Ali Bepari, a poor peasant, who became a member because of his position as Secretary of the Krisak Samity; Nazir Ali, who gained the position because of his status as school teacher cum post-master. The last member, Sakti Sarkar, is influential in his para.

Table 10 : Composition of the bicher soba

Name	Status	Economic standing	Village
Boro Dewan	Chairman, U.C.	Rich peasant	Mirabo
Majed Sarkar	Head, Sarkar family	Rich peasant	Nayapara
Nazir Dewan	Eloquent speaker	Middle peasant	Mirabo
Kasem Mia	School teacher	Middle peasant	Mirabo
Daroga Ali Talukdar	Head, Talukdar family	Rich peasant	Nayapara
Inam Ali Bepari	Secretary, Krisak Samity	Poor peasant	Mirabo
Nazir Ali	School teacher - Postmaster	Middle peasant	Mirabo
Sakti Sarkar	Influential man	Middle peasant	Nayapara

In the next section I will concentrate on the concept of social formation. A social formation comprises several modes of production combined to form a specific structure of articulation. The concrete complex is composed of economic practice, political practice and ideological practice at a certain place and stage of development. Thus in the concrete context of M & N I will explore the economic, political and ideological characteristics which derive from the two colonial capitalist periods and the post-colonial period.

3.7 Social Formation

Following Godelier, I use the method of "synthetic definition" for defining a social formation.[1] "Synthetic definition" in the context of a peasant society means incorporating into the analysis the articulation of several modes of production and the recognition of the diversity of social forms. The significance of the above

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1. To produce a synthetic definition, certain scientific steps are needed in order to "1. identify the number and character of the various modes of production which are found combined in a particular way within a specific society and which constitute its economic base at a specific period; 2. identify the various elements in the social and ideological super-structure whose origin and function correspond to these various modes of production; 3. define the exact form and content of the articulation and combination of these various modes of production in a hierarchical order, insofar as one mode of production dominates the others, and in some way subjects them to the needs and logic of its own mode of functioning, and integrates them, more or less, in the mechanism of its own reproduction; 4. define the distinctive functions of each element of the super-structure and of the ideology which despite the fact that they originated in different modes of production are found combined in a specific way corresponding to the hierarchical ordering of the elements. Whatever their origins, these super-structural elements are thus redefined and given a new content" (Godelier, 1974, pp. 63-64).

observation will be illustrated in the case of Mirabo and Nayapara, employing three reference periods: the British colonial period; from the British colonial period to the Pakistani colonial period; and from the Pakistani colonial period to the post-colonial period.

3.7.1. British colonial period

This period existed during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. In Mirabo and Nayapara, the village economy revolved around the Dewan and the Sarkar families. The heads of both families were strong arm men of the Hindu Zamindars of Kasimpur. The two settlements formed part of their estate. The government made the original land revenue settlement with them under the system of Permanent Settlement. The tenants paid highly exploitative fixed rents. Around the Dewan and Sarkar families was built the social division of labour. At that time, the area was dense forest, thinly populated, full of wild animals and a hunting ground for robbers. The Zamindars wanted to colonise the land and gave permission to the founders of the Dewan and Sarkar families to settle there. They brought their brothers and other kinsmen from their place of origin, from Narsingdi, far away from Savar. Land was in abundance but labour was the basic problem. The other members of the families, under the supervision of their elders, were forced to clear the forest and to cultivate the land. All land was appropriated by the Zamindars, a certain portion of which they gave to the elders as gifts in return for their services. Over the heads of the other members the elders

stood in a hierarchy and constituted a link between the other cultivators and the Zamindars. The situation had a certain correspondence with pre-colonial India.[1]

However, during this period, rural Bengal was "lawless" in a limited sense, as state power extended discontinuously and operated minimally. Power in the rural areas was therefore clustered around local strong points (Calkins, 1971; Hobsbawm, 1974, p. 32). The ancestors of both families were muscle-men of the Zamindars; power and influence coalesced around the local strong points and were reinforced by patron-client relationships.

I will now examine the structure of localised power and localised production and appropriation during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. The British-introduced property relations resulted in several layers of control over land. First, there was the Zamindar. He paid land revenue directly to the government. He then might lease out the land to others for money or mortgage on loan. This lease was either permanent or it was granted for the life of the lease holder. In this way a chain of control continued until it reached the actual cultivator. Thus the Zamindars regulated relations at the village

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1. Nurul Hassan has aptly described the situation:

> "In view of the shortage of cultivators, the Zamindars enjoyed the right to restrain the tenants from leaving the land and to compel them to cultivate all the arable land held by them" (Hassan, 1969, p. 28).

level by remote control. On the other hand the colonial government transformed the pre-capitalist mode of localised production and appropriation by changing the agrarian economy. Raw materials like jute were now grown for the metropolitan economy of England. Hence the development of capitalism in agriculture was linked to the structure of control over the surplus extracted; and control over trade in jute and jute goods was exercised even at the local levels by capital originating from metropolitan England. Commodity production in the colony was disrupted and the surplus extracted went to support capital accumulation at the centre (Bagchi, 1975).

3.7.2 From the British colonial period to the Pakistani colonial period

The land system imposed by the British began to crack as a result of two concrete forces: 1. successive land legislation, and 2. the development of capitalism in industrial centres. The land legislation of 1928 and 1938 (Kabir, 1972) was carried out to provide security to tenants.[1] The Act of 1950 abolished Permanent Settlement and granted the occupancy tenants heritable,

1. "Under the Rent Acts of 1859 and 1869 an occupancy raiyat could not transfer his holding except with the consent of his landlord, unless the custom of the country or the locality authorized such transfer. The Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885, had no specific provision for transfer of occupancy holdings but declared that the right to transfer, if it existed by custom, could not be taken away by any contract entered into between the landlord and the raiyat. By the Amending Act of 1928, however, an occupancy holding was made transferable in the same manner and to the same extent as other immovable property, subject to payment of the landlord's fee and pre-emption. But the Amending Act of 1938 abolished those rights of landlords; rather it gave the right of pre-emption to a co-sharer tenant with an occupancy raiyat" (Abdullah, 1973, p.18).

transferable ownership rights. As a result of the partition of India in 1947, the Hindu landlords, including the Zamindars of Kasimpur, emigrated to India. In 1950 the Zamindari system was abolished and with it the economic control by Hindu minorities was rescinded (Myrdal, 1968, p.316).

The Act of 1950 had three important aspects. The first concerned, heritable, transferable, ownership rights. It made the peasants the proprietors of their land. The second was the elimination of rent-receiving interests and illegal exactions (abwab s). These were amounts extorted from the peasants above the normal payment for rent. Thus, the peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara became proprietors of their land and were freed from the illegal exactions of the Kasimpur Zamindars. The third aspect was the re-distribution of land. So far as Mirabo and Nayapara were concerned, this re-distribution of land did not take place. There were two reasons for this: 1. the ruling elite was not serious about the re-distribution of land, and 2. there were loopholes in the re-distribution methods used by the administration.[1]

1. The law was made in such a way that the landless families were unlikely to get the land. "Under section 76 of the Act, preference was to be given to bona fide cultivating families with less than three acres of land. In 1957, the Revenue Department further laid down an order of priority (the 3-acre limit applies to all). 1. Tenants of diluviated land (i.e. land washed away by a river). 2. Ex-military men with 'long and meritous service' 3. Any tenant not employing hired labour. 4. Refugees. 5. Ex-rent receivers with no retainable Khas (government) land ... However, the land was not given away free. A successful applicant for khas land would have to pay a sum of money called salami to the government. A government circular dated 12th August, 1957, set the salami at five to ten times the annual rent. On 9th August, 1958, this was re-fixed at 50 percent of the market value of the land. One would imagine that this implied an enhancement. On November 1962 this was further enhanced, and now the salami was to be the full market value of the land" (Abdullah, 1973, pp. 30-31).

During the period from 1920 to 1947, political awareness among the peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara developed. In the 1920's, two Hindus from Mirabo joined the Non-Cooperation Movement of Gandhi. Gandhi's name was associated with a sense of millenary expectation.[1] During the 1920's, the Khilafat movement was also sweeping rural Bengal and the Moulanas (religious leaders of the Muslim community) of the Savar area joined the movement in order to restore the Khalifa of Islam, deposed by the British in the after-math of World War I. In the next two decades, the Communist Party worked in this area to steel the consciousness of the peasants against the oppression inflicted by the colonial government, the landlords and the money lenders (Rasul, 1969). The peasants here agitated against the imposition of taxes and levies on the weekly bazaars of Kasimpur and Savar by the Zamindars and their agents. Local peasants, as well as petty traders, were obliged to pay levies, locally known as tola, to the landlord or his agent for permission to sell agricultural produce and vegetables. These struggles were directed against both the landlord and the British Raj: they took the form of a no-tax campaign.

The second force that shaped agrarian class rleations and the national economy was the development of capitalism

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1. According to the Govenor of Bengal: "Recent reports from different districts inform me that it is widely being stated in the villages that Gandhi Raj has come and that there no longer is any necessity to pay anything to anybody. They are consequently not only refusing to pay any rent and taxes but are repudiating their debts" (Lord Ronaldshay to E.S. Montagu, 18th May, 1921 and 9th February, 1922. I.O.L. Montagu Papers, Mss. EUR. D. 523 (32). See also Barrington Moore, Jnr., 1974, pp. 370-385.

under Pakistani colonial rule (Nations, 1971). A cash-crop agriculture based in the East was made subservient to industries predominantly located in the West. From this economic base the colonial government built up the framework of a mixed economy which paved the way for colonial exploitation of the region by Pakistan.[1] Within this framework, Tongi's industrial belt and the Savar Dairy Farm (see Map I) were established during the 1950's. Because of the widening of the industrial market, industrial products penetrated the local market. At the same time, households, which had previously provided begar (unpaid physical labour) services to the Dewans and the Sarkars, began to participate in agricultural labour as a secondary occupation. Some emigrated to Tongi and to Dacca's industrial belt. The

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1. "The First Five Year Plan of Pakistan allocated only a little over 10% of the total resources in the public sector to agriculture and in the ultimate analysis even this was not realised. Besides, several policy measures including direct controls on prices and distribution of agricultural commodities and unfavourable exchange rate for agricultural exports acted as disincentive for increasing farm output. Furthermore, hardly any beginning was made in favour of changing rural institutions, production relationships (e,g. effective land reform), introduction and adoption of improved techniques in agriculture and finally, provision of adequate physical infrastructure" (Alamgir and Berlage, 1974, pp. 48-49).

surplus, thus extracted from agriculture, went to support capital accumulation at the centre, both in the British and the Pakistani colonial periods. This resulted in two types of economy in the rural areas: (a) a surplus economy of the rich peasants geared to the production of cash crops and allowing capital accumulation for the colonial economy and (b) a survival economy of the poor peasants geared to the production of food crops and the supply of cheap labour for urban industries. Personal forms of dependency on landlords was declining as a result of state legislation regarding land ownership, the emigration of Hindu Zamindars to India, intensification of the politics of nationalism and class struggle. Commodity production was on the increase where household enterprise was dominant. This production was based mainly on cash crops and on a marketable surplus. This gradually increased the cash incomes of the rich peasants and also correspondingly affected their expenditure.

3.7.3. From the Pakistani colonial period to the post-colonial period

Improved resources and methods of cultivation were injected into the production structure of the post-1950 village economy. This attempt gained momentum especially in the post-1960 period. As a result, surpluses were generated to the benefit of the rich peasants, who expanded their scale of operations and to a certain extent introduced mechanized means of cultivation. Capitalist features emerged in certain rich peasant households: i.e. produce was aimed at a capitalist market and mechanization and the maximum use of hired

labour for cultivation took place. This tended to undermine the patron and client pattern of production relations. The increasing reliance on petty trades and on agricultural labour by client or sharecropper household further eroded service relations. At the same time, the rich peasants became increasingly reluctant to rent out lands on a share-cropping basis and began cultivating them for commercial production. This produced a situation in which share-cropping tenants and full-time labourers were displaced although the seasonal demand for labour increased. (This is elaborated in chapters V and VI). Labour, it appears, presented no problems because of the insufficient growth of industrialization. Labour was made free from personal dependence on rich peasants and the bargaining capacity of the labourers increased. Yet at the same time, because of the short seasonal demand and the limited scope for employment in urban centres, their economic condition deteriorated. They became progressively pauperized. Thus, the pattern of economic development generated inequalities in the rural areas.

At the political level, the peasants of this area participated in the upsurge against the Ayub regime in 1969. Peasants' vendettas against cattle-thieves were expressed during the anti-Ayub agitation by the burning of the houses of rich peasants and by executing anti-social elements - such as cattle thieves and village touts. In spite of the governmental machinery for law and order, the security of life and property remains a serious problem in the rural areas. Armed gangs of youths prowl about, enjoying the protection of the rich

peasants. The rich peasants have influence over the political and administrative system and they operate the local government structure. They intimidate rural inhabitants through their proteges stealing the cattle and burning the houses of those peasants who resist them. They secure political support for the ruling party. This explains the relationships of the rich peasants both with the administration and with the anti-social elements. It also accounts for the wrath of the people against the Basic Democrats[1] and their proteges. A case in point is Motalib Bepari of Mirabo. He is a poor peasant living on the produce of a quarter bigha of land, who sells his labour and the milk of his cows. His cows were stolen in 1969. He trailed them to Savar bazaar, then to Manikgonj where he caught up with the culprit. There he joined a vendetta with other peasants and murdered the thief.

The epicentre of the movement against the Ayub regime was Manikgonj (see Map II). This is a major market town of the Dacca district, with one degree-college and three high schools. Students come from the rural areas; they stay in the villages near to the towns in which their institutions are located. They are known as "lodging masters" since they act as tutors to the local children

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1. The Basic Democracies system was introduced in 1959 by the Ayub regime both to modify and to strengthen the system of local government. The members known as Basic Democrats were drawn from the rich peasants stratum. And that was the intention of the regime. They control the rural economy through their surplus land and supply of credit. The economic domination of this class has been strengthened by their political domination. See Sobhan, 1968, pp. 73-100).

in return for free board and lodging. They have roots in the villages and by acting as political communicators, they keep in touch with the peasantry. Market areas are crucial in such a communication system. In the 1970 election, Sangram Samitis (struggle committees) were formed by the Awami League in Savar thana (police station) and Yarpur union. Students under Tobarak Hossain acted as communicators between the peasantry and the Dacca-based political bosses, using the rural marketing system to spread the growing nationalism. (The role of Tobarak, a college student and a member of the Dewan family, will be discussed in greater detail later.) Ayoob analysed in depth the roles played by peasants, students and the rural marketing system (Ayoob, 1971, pp. 40-59).

5.8 Village Economy

Both Mirabo and Nayapara are essentially rice-growing villages. Other crops include sugarcane, pulses, oil seeds and vegetables. There is a tendency among the rich peasants to give up the cultivation of rice. Since rice calls for labour-intensive operations, the rich peasants are converting their lands from rice to sugar-cane. Apart from the higher cash income, the main attraction of sugarcane cultivation is that it requires fewer units of labour in comparison with rice lands of equal size. (This point will be expanded later). Villagers grow vegetables mainly for sale in the markets. Besides traditional rice strains, they grow IRRI-20 and IRRI-8. These are improved seeds. Irrigation is needed for IRRI-20. Mirabo and Nayapara have one power pump

for irrigation purposes. The growth of IRRI-20 is abundant and its straw is appealing to cattle, but the growth of IRRI-8 is comparatively sparce and cattle do not like its straw. During the rainy season fodder is a problem. Although the use of fertilizer in cultivation is on the increase, it is difficult to purchase at the official price. As the supply is irregular, a black market flourishes, for those who do not have access to the source are forced to purchase over and above the controlled rate.

In 1974 the population of Mirabo was 854 and of Nayapara 404 people. Table 11 below shows the amount of land owned by the different classes of peasants in the two villages.

Table 11 : Land ownership in bighas by peasant class in Mirabo and Nayapara

	No. of Households	Area owned (in bighas)
Mirabo		
Rich peasant 25 +	5	350
Middle peasant 10 +	60	792
Poor peasant 5 +	23	115
Landless	9	0
Total	97	Total 1257
Nayapara		
Rich peasant 25 +	6	400
Middle peasant 10 +	11	200
Poor peasant 5 +	3	15
Landless	7	0
Total	27	Total 615

In Mirabo, there are five families which may be classified as rich peasants. Two of these families own one hundred bigha each, forty-seven families have ten bigha of land each, and the remaining two families own twenty and twenty-seven bigha respectively. In Nayapara, two of the six rich peasant households own one hundred bigha of land each, while the other four families each has fifty bigha. In the middle peasant group, six families own twenty-five bigha each and the other five families each own ten bigha. In both villages, the middle peasants are the most numerous category. The lower end of the middle peasant range and the poor peasants rent land from rich peasants on a share-cropping basis. The landless families live exclusively as agricultural labourers. In addition to cultivation, poor peasants must sell their labour to supplement their incomes. The rich peasants, on the other hand, besides cultivation, invest their money in trade, in road-making contracts and in shops at Savar and other markets. The lower-middle peasants and the poor peasants cultivate their lands by family labour. Agricultural labourers once received three meals a day (morning, midday and evening meals), as well as cash. They are now paid a daily wage only.

3.9 Kinship and Lineage in the context of marriage

In Mirabo, the Dewan lineage accounts for five families in the rich peasant group, thirty middle peasant families, eight poor peasant families and four landless families. The Bepari lineage has a larger concentration of poor peasant families. It includes two rich peasant

Table 12 : Detailed breakdown of land ownership by peasant class

Village : Mirabo

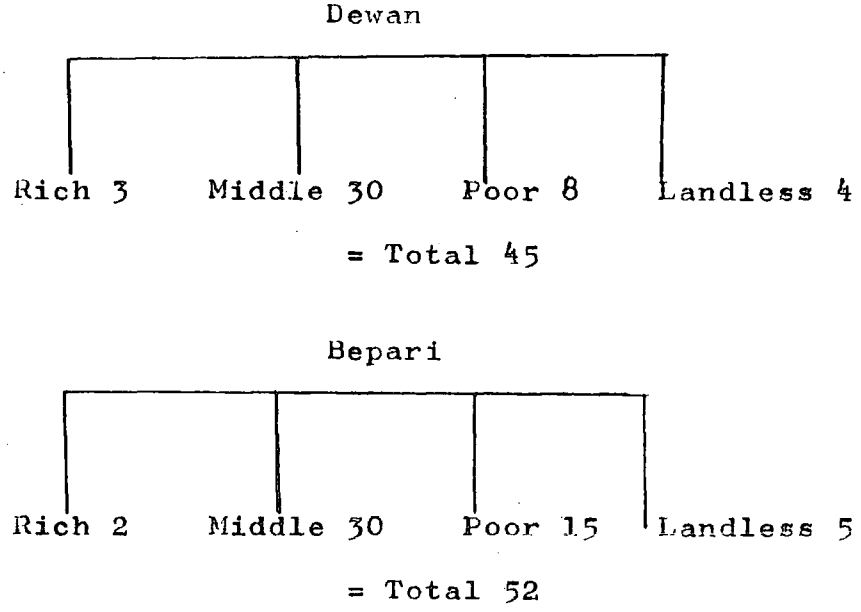
Class	No. of families	Area owned (bighas)
Rich peasant 25 +	2	100 each
	3	50 each
Middle peasant 10 +	11	25 each
	47	10 each
	1	20
	1	27

Village : Nayapara

Rich peasant 25 +	2	100 each
	4	50 each
Middle peasant 10 +	6	25 each
	5	10 each

families, thirty middle peasant families, fifteen poor peasant and five landless families. In Nayapara, four of the six rich peasant families are of the Sarkar lineage and two belong to Talukdar. Seven of the middle peasant families belong to the Sarkar lineage and four to the Talukdar lineage. The Sarkar lineage claims one poor peasant and two landless families, while two of the poor peasant families and five of the landless families belong to the Talukdar lineage. (This account concentrates on the predominantly Muslim community. The landless Hindu Rishi lineage of two households has been excluded because of the insignificant role they play and because they have no social nor economic connection with the village).

Figure 5 : Lineage affiliation of households : Mirabo



Economic well-being and social status are the important considerations in the selection of husbands or wives. A father wants his daughter to be married into a family where she will be 'happy'. Happiness in this context means a family whose economic standing is secure

and where a young wife will not perform more than the normal domestic duties. On the other hand the wives of the poor families work not only in their husbands' household, but also are often sent to work as domestic help in the households of the wealthy villagers, especially during the harvesting season. In the context of Mirabo and Nayapara the wives of the poor kinsmen often work in the households of their rich kin as domestic help. Working as domestic help negates izzat (status honour). This raises the question of which is more important: status or economic position? A number of times I discussed this with the villagers. The answers I received were always the same: economic considerations are the most important factor in the selection of spouses and husbands. The pattern of marriage alliances was formerly arranged within villages bearing in mind economic considerations. As one informant put it: "to us economic position and lineage status are the same". But the recent trend is somewhat different. The rich and middle peasant families try to make marriage alliances out of the village, especially in urban areas. Table 13 illustrates this recent trend:

Table 13 : Marriages occurring in Mirabo and Nayapara over three years: 1973, 1974, 1975

Type of peasant	Year	Location		Total No.
		Intra-village	Extra-village	
Rich	1973	+		1
Middle	1973	+	+	2
Rich	1974		+	2
Middle	1974			0
Rich	1975		+	1
Middle	1975		+	1
				7

Out of seven marraiges covering the three-year period, two took place within the village and four externally. In three out of the four extra-village marriages the wives came from urban areas; and the marriage ceremonies took place in the towns. In the last case the husband was from the urban area. The marriage ceremony took place in the town because the bride was staying with her brother, but only the parents went there from the village to attend the ceremony.

The dominant tendency is for rich and middle peasant families to make matrimonial alliances out of the village. In such marriages, the poor and landless branches of the family are not usually invited to the wedding feast. The invitees to a rural marriage ceremony, generally, do not give presents to the bride and groom. They come, take part in the feast, bless the bride and groom and go away. The giving of presents is a custom associated with the urban areas; and only the rich and the affluent middle peasants can afford this. I was present at the wedding of Talukdar's son. D. Ali Talukdar, a rich peasant of Nayapara, is the head of the Talukdar family. His son is a professor of a local college. He married the daughter of a police officer stationed at Manikgonj. When a wedding is arranged the head of the family normally asks his close relations to come and have food with him. When the feast is over he informs them of the pending marriage in order to get their formal consent. In this case the head of the Talukdar family informally told the Talukdar lineage about the marriage but did not ask his poor relations to attend the ceremony which was

arranged at Manikgonj. I asked one poor peasant related to Talukdar about this. His reaction was sharp:

- "Why should I be invited? They are rich and I am poor. If I am invited, I cannot go. I have no shoes, no decent clothing. Moreover I cannot give any present.
- But you are his kin.
- So what? It does not make any difference.
- Would you invite him to one of your feasts?"

He pondered a little, and then said:

- "Most probably not. I will ask my own kind.
- What kind?
- Poor like myself. I have no plough, no pair of bullocks. In seasons when I need help, I turn to my neighbours. We pool our resources, rent a plough and bullocks and till our lands. I sometimes work on my neighbour's land, weeding his grass. And he does the same for me."

It is significant then, that poor peasants look to themselves for solutions to their problems, rather than to their richer kinsmen.

3.10. Status Titles and Economic Groupings

Village people are aware of the correspondence between status titles and economic groupings. They differentiate between ucho-bongsho (high status lineage), madhya-bongsho (middle status lineage) and nicho-bongsho (low status lineage). This discrimination is based on status title or its lack. They also discriminate between ucho-obostha (high economic standing), madhya-obostha

(middle economic standing) and nicho-obostha (low economic standing). Their subjective discrimination tends to correspond to the objective situation if we relate lineage status to economic standing based on landholding. Here I have attempted to classify village people based on lineage status by peasant categories.

Table 14 : Types of lineage in relation to economic standing

Village	Peasant type (as measured by land-ownership)	Title	Number
Mirabo	Rich	Dewan	3
	Middle	Dewan	30
	Poor	Dewan	8
	Landless	Dewan	4
	Rich	Bepari	2
	Middle	Bepari	13
	Poor	Bepari	15
	Landless	Bepari	5
Nayapara	Rich	Sarkar	3
	Middle	Sarkar	7
	Poor	Sarkar	1
	Landless	Sarkar	2
	Rich	Talukdar	3
	Middle	Talukdar	4
	Poor	Talukdar	2
	Landless	Talukdar	5

Dewan - High status title
Sarkar - High status title
Talukdar - High status title
Bepari - Low status title

In Mirabo and Nayapara persons of high status title are not always wealthy. Since ownership of property is individual, not corporate, the mere belonging to a high-status lineage does not give economic standing unless one has the ability to maintain and accumulate property. In this way each sub-unit of a particular lineage

acquires an economically separate standing (obostha). In the case of the Bepari (a low status title), their high economic standing in the range of landownership categories gives them rank in the village. There is also a trend (which I described earlier) in the Bepari lineage in the high and middle economic categories (obostha) towards changing to high status titles, while in the Dewan lineage those in the low economic categories tend not to use the title. Nowadays village people assess status considering wealth, education, power and influence. If we examine the composition of bicher soba (Table 10) we find that out of the eight members, five are from the rich and middle peasant categories and from high status titled lineages. One is a poor peasant from the Bepari lineage. He is influential because he is secretary of Krisak Samity. This gives him status. Two others from the Bepari lineage who do not use 'Bepari title: both are school teachers and middle peasants. Education and landownership in their case accords them status. From the composition of bicher soba and the functioning of Samaj and day-to-day behaviour pattern of the village people we find that landownership and control are the main, if not only, determinants of status, power and influence.

3.11 Farm Resources

These include properties other than land. By farm resources are meant cows, bullocks, buffaloes, calves, poultry, ducks, ploughs, levellers, yokes, other tools and instruments, cowsheds, carts and boats. There is a correspondence between the pattern of land ownership and

control over such farm resources. They again influence the behaviour pattern of individual households. The behaviour pattern of an individual tenant depends on whether he is an owner or a tenant, a lender or a borrower; whether he belongs to a high status lineage or not; whether he has access to political power or not. If we define production relations from the point of view of the ownership of land and farm resources, then possibly we can analyse the relative position of a household in the structure of dominance and see whether it belongs to a dominant class or a dominated class. In this specific case, we can identify different classes on the basis of tenurial status, ownership and control over farm resources, and lender-debtor relationship. Among these criteria, ownership and control over farm resources are important. Formation of classes in rural areas is centred on property relations, and the different tenurial arrangements are the consequences of the pattern of land ownership and level of technology practised. Apart from land, farm resources per peasant household show the extent of poverty and differentiation among the peasantry of Mirabo and Nayapara. In Mirabo, thirty-seven families have no plough and bullocks. These include twenty-three families each owning five bigha of land and fourteen families who own ten bigha each. In Nayapara, eight families have no plough and bullocks. Five of these families have ten bigha of land each and three own five bigha each.

Table 15 : Farm resources in relation to land owned

Village	No. of families	Land owned	Plough and bullocks owned
Mirabo	14	10 bigha each	x
	23	5 " "	x
Nayapara	5	10 bigha each	x
	3	5 " "	x

This indicates that the ownership element is important in the sense that the owner of the means of production is both the expropriator of surplus value (exploiter) and at the same time performs the function of capital (non-labour). The non-owner of the means of production is exploited and at the same time performs the function of labour (labourer). This also explains why a middle peasant (from the standpoint of ownership of land) is forced to perform the function of labour. His ownership over farm resources is not sufficient to cover all the means of production (both land and farm resources). This implies that there can be a discrepancy between position and agent at the level of production process, between the value of the agent's labour power and the value required by a position.

3.12 Non-Economic Differences

Rich peasants and upper-middle peasants have larger homesteads and houses (ghor) of better construction. Their homesteads have roofs of tin rather than of mud. They have a separate area known as kachari ghor for

entertaining visitors and receiving guests. They have enough land for an attached pond or well where members of the homestead can bathe in private. These are symbols of status and affluence, of what Weber calls, "status honour". The landless, the poor and the lower-middle peasants cannot maintain this "status honour". They and their womenfolk bathe in the pond or well of others. They do not have kachari ghor; they entertain and receive visitors and guests in their own homesteads. Though they belong to the same lineage, the rich and the upper-middle peasants are in a position to maintain purdah of their women and to entertain guests on a genteel plane. Maintaining the privacy of women and entertaining guests in a separate homestead are indicators of izzat (honour) of a ghor. It is significant that non-economic differences of status, honour, privacy are all attributed along class lines. Mere belonging to particular kin branches does not give "status honour" unless one has the ability to maintain izzat. Different groups have differential access to the means of production and to goods and services. This provides the link between society and economy. In a peasant society, land ownership and land relations are important determinants of the distribution of power, status and influence. Possession of land influences the composition of the household, influences the style of life, and pinpoints the status of the person and of the homestead in the social organization of the rural areas. Following Weber, we may conclude:

> "Class distinctions are linked in the most varied ways with status distinctions. Property as such

is not always recognized as a status qualification, but in the long run it is, and with extraordinary regularity" (Garth and Mills, 1958, p.7).

Izzat of a person and of the homestead depends on the maintenance of property. A poor kinsman has reached his particular situation because of loss of property through various factors: chronic indebtedness, bad harvests, mortgages of land, etc. He is unable to maintain his status, becomes poor or landless; his economic situation (obostha) makes him unable to maintain the status honour of a given lineage. His rich kin maintain the status honour of the kin group. For instance, it is Boro Dewan who, as the wealthiest member of the whole Dewan kin group, maintains its status honour. The poorer members of a family, because of their unfavourable economic situation (kharap obostha), will generally have minimal social relationship (otha bosa) with their richer kin.

3.13 Crop-Sharing

There are two kinds of share-croppers in Mirabo and Nayapara: the landless who cultivate the lands of others on a share-cropping basis, and the poor and lower-middle peasants who, although they have land of their own, also share-crop rented land. The first group are known as landless share-croppers, the second group as half share-croppers. Share-cropping is contractual, often seasonal. Sometimes, through poverty, a poor peasant like Inam Ali of Mirabo is forced to rent out a portion of his land as he has no ploughing implements. The school teacher-cum-postmaster, Nuru Dewan, has twenty-five bighas of land.

He cultivates fifteen bigha by hired labour and the rest he rents out. Nasim Ali Talukdar owns ten bigha of land; but to increase his income, he rents additional land from other peasants. Share-croppers invest their labour and capital in the land. They must provide all implements of production. However, there is no set pattern. The land available for share-cropping is variable and in most cases its disposal is governed by the needs of the landowners. As it is contractual on an annual basis, there is no guarantee that the share-cropper will be able to rent the same land in the following year. Landowners prefer to change their tenants each year lest they might otherwise lose their rights over their land. Details of share-cropping will be discussed later when we consider the combination of occupations followed by different peasant households.

Do landowners rent out their land to their poor kin? It depends on the situation. Renting out is largely governed by the interests of the land-owners, rather than by kinship. If landowners are seeking support, as at times of election to the office of the Union Council or to the Cooperative Association, or if they are leaving the village for a short time, then they may perhaps rent out to their poorer kinsmen. In a later section, I will discuss in some detail the behaviour pattern of Boro Dewan with respect to renting out land.

I wish to stress that my aim in this chapter has been simply to show how land ownership and land relations shape the social structure, and my discussion of family, social groups, status, inheritance, marriage, behaviour

pattern towards persons and crop-sharing has had this end in view. There is a close correspondence of non-economic with economic differences. In the next chapter I will examine the process of differentiation which has evolved out of the internal economic structure of the peasant society and its encapsulation within the larger entity of the state.

Chapter IV : The Process of Differentiation

4.1 Economic Differentiation

In the preceding chapter, an attempt has been made to throw some light on the differentiation process of the peasantry within the setting of two Bangladesh villages. In this chapter, in the first portion, I discuss the process of economic differentiation which emerged from socio-economic relations, the kinship system, non-economic differences, farm resources and social groupings. Economic differentiation has its bearing on political differentiation, which I discussed briefly in the last portion of this chapter.

The process of economic differentiation has transformed the rich peasants and some middle peasants into commodity-oriented farming households. These households rely on hired labour, produce mainly for the market and use modern cultivation methods. On the other hand, the process has pauperized the poor peasants and has forced them to sell their labour for their livelihood. The middle peasant households are at either end of the scale, depending on their concrete economic circumstances. In the following sections I attempt a more detailed analysis of the differentiation process at work in the two villages. I have classified the peasantry using the criterion of the relative land-resource ownership position of the household. With it I now include the following factors: household position with regard to both old and new production techniques and also in relation to existing resources; ownership of modern productive assets such as

tractors; the amount and proportion of non-agricultural income and its sources; the questions of tenancy and credit; and the household's relative position in the power structure of the village. It is necessary to examine these multifarious factors because households with a similar land-resource ownership position may display different production relations and earn their livelihoods in different ways.

Occupational Categories

Tables 16 and 17 present the differing structures of households by occupational combinations.

Tables 18 and 19 show the ownership of selected assets, money lending and other non-agricultural sources of income.

4.2 Poor peasants

The activities of poor peasant households engaged in more than one occupation can be divided into three groups. The first group is composed of occupations connected with cultivation: owner operated cultivation, tenancy cultivation and agricultural labour. In the second group are included artisan occupations, petty trades and services. The third group includes occupations connected with technological and infra-structural requirements.

4.2.1 Own operated cultivation

The poor peasants are eager to use new technology in the form of fertilizers and improved seeds, but their ability to take advantage of such advances depends on

Table 16 : Occupational combinations in Mirabo

Number and type of household	Occupation	
	Principal	Secondary
5 Rich peasant	5 Own cultivation	5 Money lending
		3 Shop keeping
		5 Vegetable selling
		2 Land speculation
		2 Teaching
60 Middle peasant	60 Own cultivation	40 Tenancy cultivation
		20 Agricultural labour
		20 Shop keeping
		30 Vegetable selling
		10 Milk selling
		3 Gur making
		1 Teaching
		1 Tailoring
		10 Other services
23 Poor peasant	23 Own cultivation	15 Tenancy cultivation
		23 Agricultural labour
		½ Shop keeping
		6 Vegetable selling
		1 Milk selling
		15 Basket making
		2 Masonry
		10 Rope and straw production
		5 Gur making
		1 Cart driving
		1 Tailoring
		1 Chaukidar (police)
		1 Tractor driving
		1 General repair
		10 Other services outside village
29 Landless	9 Daily Labourer	½ Tenancy cultivation
		2 Milk selling
		1 Basket making
		2 Gur making

Table 17 : Occupational combinations in Nayapara

Number and type of household	Occupation	
	Principal	Secondary
6 Rich peasant	6 Own cultivation	6 Money lending
		2 Shop keeping
		6 Vegetable selling
		2 Milk selling
		2 Teaching
		1 Other services outside village
11 Middle peasant	11 Own cultivation	8 Tenancy cultivation
		6 Agricultural labour
		6 Vegetable selling
		2 Shop keeping
		2 Milk selling
		2 Basket weaving
		3 Gur making
3 Poor peasant	3 Own cultivation	3 Tenancy cultivation
		3 Agricultural labour
		1 Shop keeping
		2 Vegetable selling
		1 Gur making
		1 Rope and straw production
		1 Cart driving
7 Landless	7 Daily labourer	2 Tenancy cultivation
		2 Vegetable selling
		1 Basket making
		1 Gur making

Table 18 : Ownership of selected assets

Village	Assets owned	Type of peasant Rich	Middle	Poor	Landless
Mirabo		5	60	23	9
	Tractor and other improved implements	2	-	-	-
	Cold storage, warehouse, cars and trucks	2	-	-	-
	Tube well	3	-	-	-
	Draught cattle	5	14	-	-
	Bamboo groves	5	10	1	-
	Shops and flour mills	5	5	-	-
	Petty trades	-	10	5	1
Nayapara		6	11	3	7
	Tractor and other improved implements	1	-	-	-
	Cold storage, warehouse, cars and trucks	-	-	-	-
	Tube well	1	-	-	-
	Draught cattle	6	6	-	-
	Bamboo groves	6	6	-	-
	Shops and flour mills	-	-	-	-
	Petty trades	-	-	2	-

Table 19 : Money lending and other sources of non-agricultural income

Village	Type of peasant	No. of households involved
Mirabo	Rich	5
	Middle	20
	Poor	-
	Landless	-
Nayapara	Rich	6
	Middle	6
	Poor	-
	Landless	-

access to major economic resources (Nash, 1961). How much land one has is important. If a poor household is multi-occupational, it is in a better economic position than the landless household, because possession of land (however small) makes the difference. The household engaged in more than one occupation earns a reasonable portion of income from outside agriculture, and is thus in a position to invest surplus earned from outside in agriculture in the form of various inputs e.g. fertilizer, better seeds, etc. In this way, the household increases its output and is then better placed to resist forces towards proletarianization. However, in reality, the investment of surpluses seldom takes place because poor peasants have little access to developmental agencies and because they have little land in comparison with that of middle and rich peasants (Griffin, 1972). Control over the cooperative societies operating in Mirabo and Nayapara illustrates this point. There are two agricultural development cooperative societies in Mirabo and one in Nayapara. Fertilizers, improved seeds, agricultural loans and irrigation water via the power pump are channelled through these societies. There are fourteen members in each society in Mirabo. In the first society, A, six members in 1974 held more than twenty-five bigha of land. Of the other eight members, four owned between ten and fifteen bigha and four held less than ten bigha. In the second society, B, the level of land ownership was lower. Eight of the fourteen members held more than ten bigha, four owned less than ten bigha and the remaining two members had less than five bigha each. In each society,

the number of members for whom farming was the sole occupation has declined over time. The first society had six such members, the second society four. Those who were farmers as well as businessmen were in the majority in A; in B, most members were farmers and petty traders. In Nayapara, the society had ten members. Here four members held more than twenty-five bigha, four had ten to fifteen bigha and two owned less than five bigha. Two members had farming as their only occupation. Table 20 shows the membership of the cooperatives in relation to land holding and other characteristics.

Table 20 : Membership of cooperatives in Mirabo and Nayapara

Village	Total Members of Cooperatives	No. of holdings	Land (bigha)	Agriculture as Sole Occupation
Mirabo	A: 14	6	25+	-
		2	15+	-
		2	10+	2
		4	10-	4
	B: 14	8	10+	-
		4	5-10	2
		2	5-	2
Nayapara	10	4	25+	-
		2	15	-
		2	10	-
		2	5-	2

For power pump irrigation, a large or a level plot of land is needed; and in both Mirabo and Nayapara, it has been the rich and the middle peasants who have been able to consolidate their lands through purchase and exchange,

growing IRRI rice on these lands. Though the IRRI harvest is abundant in comparison with traditional rice strains, the poor peasants, despite the cooperatives, are generally unable to reap the benefits.

How much land is owned by such poor peasant households? In Mirabo, twenty-three poor peasant households together hold 115 bigha of land, whereas the sixty middle peasant and five rich peasant households own a total of 1,142 bigha of land. In Nayapara, the three poor peasant households own fifteen bigha altogether, while the combined eleven middle peasant and six rich peasant households own 600 bigha of land.

Table 21 : Combined amount of land owned by number and type of households

Village	Type of household	No. of households	Combined land owned
Mirabo	Poor	23	115 bigha
	Middle and rich	65	1,142 bigha
Nayapara	Poor	3	15 bigha
	Middle and rich	17	600 bigha

The small size of the holdings limits the extent of the benefit the poor peasants can get from the new technology. Since not all peasants have equal access to fertilizers, water, technical knowledge and credit, the new technology is biased against the poor (Lee and Mellow, 1972; Schluter, 1971; Shulka, 1969; Nulty, 1972).

4.2.1.2 Tenancy Cultivation

Here we are concerned with small peasants who cultivate both on cash rental and on a share-cropping basis. Share-cropping[1] (bargadari) is the more important of the two forms. When taking land on a share-cropping basis there are two aspects to consider: 1. it adds to the household's annual production; 2. it is a means of fuller utilization of the household's labour resources throughout the agricultural season. In general, the landless, the poor peasants and the lower-middle peasants in both villages rent land on either a share-cropping or a cash rental basis. They raise the rental money either from a good harvest, or from a loan or remittance outside the village and normally receive about 50% of the gross output. Seed, cattle, manure and agricultural implements are usually the share-croppers responsibility. If, however, a land owner provides any of these or makes any cash advance to his share-croppers through the difficult months, then he takes a share larger than half of the produce in adjustment. The share-crop contracts are always oral, valid usually for a year. In other words,

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1. On the growth of share-cropping system Dhanagare states: 'From the middle of the nineteenth century a large scale expansion of transport and communications brought the farm produce of the countryside within reach of urban markets. This resulted in the supplementing of the system of subsistence agriculture by the new market economy. Land owning classes now became more interested in directly securing crops for the market than in settling peasants on land. Since a share in the produce gave jotedars (either fixed-rent tenants or settled/occupancy holders, B.K.J.) an access to market they increasingly went in for crop-sharing cultivation.' (1976, pp. 361-62). See also: 1. Mukherjee, 1933; 2. Mukherjee, 1957; 3. Sinha, 1965; and 4. Government of Bengal, 1940.

share-croppers have no statutory status, and hence no security of holding. The problems and uncertainty of renting the same land were mentioned earlier, when discussing share-cropping; but another important factor is that cultivation is based in most cases on clientage system. This economy makes minimal use of capital and reflects the contradiction between wage employment and unmechanized agriculture. Using wage labour means paying wages. But as Martinez-Alier has analysed, "in some seasons of the year, marginal productivity value under full employment conditions might fall below this wage. More important than the wasted unemployment in terms of man-days can be the under-employment of the labourer's family, and the underemployment in terms of effort and quality of work, which landowners are unable to profit from in a wage-labour system" (Martinez-Alier, 1974, p. 136).

Hence so long as agriculture is not mechanized and agricultural products are not commercialized, share-cropping or similar tenancy arrangements are more profitable to the landowners than hiring labour under a wage system. In this way the middle and rich peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara are able to profit from the increased labour input of the poorer peasants. This rationale has been prevalent in many parts of the world, in Southern Spain, in pre-revolutionary Cuba, and in India (Martinez-Alier, 1971; Bardhan, and Srinivasan, 1971; Epstein, 1967).

Tenancy cultivation has another important feature. The rich and middle peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara at the

same time are afraid of leasing out lands on a long term basis lest they might forfeit their rights over them. This fear springs from the political situation and the increasing militancy of the peasants. They therefore lease land annually on a contract basis. This breeds uncertainty in the tenancy market and the tenants have little inducement to invest more money and labour in the land they rent. As the tenants do not have the means to buy fertilizers (or if they do have the means, they prefer to use the fertilizer on their own lands rather than on rented lands) and as there is no guarantee of being able to rent the same plots continuously so as to provide a constant source of income, they invest less labour and money in them. This results in zero surplus activity.

The peasant's labour input must be measured in terms of opportunity cost and not against the wage level. Sharecropping, cash tenancy or wage payment are different forms of the use of labour. If agriculture becomes more commercialized, the opportunity for rationalized ways of using labour increases. On the other hand, one must consider the relation between the peasants and their product, the articulation of peasantry as a mode of production, and its combination with other modes of production. This raises the question of commodity production. The rural economy is not a "natural consumer-labour economy". The peasants do not exist independently of externally-generated social relations, nor are they behaviourally insensitive to relative product and factor scarcities in rural and rural-urban marketing systems.

Such an interpretation negates the Chayanov type of peasant rationality[1] and rejects the following mistaken views that the relationship of share-croppers "to the landowner is not contractual but customary" (Warriner, 1969, p.45). The case of Mirabo and Nayapara demonstrates that share-cropping and cash tenancy are forms of labour utilization in an agrarian economy and that they are not fixed according to a set customary pattern. Generally speaking, the landowners rent their land during the period of low commodity prices but they prefer to cultivate their lands by wage labours when prices of agricultural commodities rise. In general, the share-croppers are the landless, the poor peasants and the lower end of the middle peasant group. This system is a means of reducing or eliminating unemployment in rural areas and as an arrangement is more conducive to

> 'bringing social or opportunity costs in line with private costs of labour' (Martinez-Alier, 1974, p.146).

In other words, all the peasants want land and land means work. The landless, the poor and the lower-middle peasants form a conjunctive sector of the same community because of their similar economic positions in production relations. However, their relationship is not only conjunctive but

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1. Peasant agriculture is "not only free of control by wages, but, on the contrary, precisely through this category it also subordinates the whole system of the capitalist economy to its internal equilibrium between demand satisfaction and the drudgery of labour" (Chayanov, 1964, p.240). As the peasant economy reproduces itself through family, its objective of production is household consumption, not profit. The basis of Chayanov's thinking is a static economy and subsistence motivation.

also competitive and complex; they oscillate because of tenancy arrangements of various kinds. But the nature of production relations forms their character as a class and determines their behaviour pattern that accompanies their class position. When Boro Dewan of Mirabo bought a tractor, the share-croppers protested through krisak samity (peasant association). They feared they would be unemployed, that they would not get land on a rental or a share-cropping basis and that they would be deprived of their livelihood. Underground left activists helped the peasants formulate their demands and actions. Both relations of production and forms of political action were involved in the case. At the political level, the peasants, however politically unmotivated, wanted land and did not want to be totally uprooted from the land. So they raised slogans: langol jar jomi tar (land to the tiller). Even the existing pattern of kin relationships failed to minimize the class character of their demands: In Mirabo, four of the landless families are related to the Dewans; eight of the twenty-three poor peasant families and twenty-eight of the sixty middle peasant families are Dewan kin. They live in the same para and sometimes in the same household (bari). The exchange of goods and services between the rich Dewans and their poor kinsmen are not infrequent. Yet, multiplex relationships it seems, did not mask their identification as a class pressing for certain specific interests; and similar processes can be documented from anthropological studies of peasant communities in other parts of the world (Khera, 1973; Mintz, 1960; Chandra, 1963).

4.2.1.3 Agricultural Labour

In this category are grouped three sections of rural folk of Mirabo and Nayapara. The landless poor households are essentially agricultural labour households. For the poor peasant households, agricultural labour is a secondary occupation. The lower middle peasants become agricultural labourers in the harvesting season. In all three groups, the households possess labour resources and rudimentary skills. The increasing mechanization of the techniques of production has affected the demand for labour. The purchase by Boro Dewan of a tractor and the installation of a power pump on the lands of the rich and the middle peasants in Mirabo has reduced the demand for labour to cultivate and to irrigate the land. It is only in the harvesting seasons that the call for labour has increased. Time is a crucial element and unless the harvesting is completed rapidly, crops may be destroyed by grain-shedding or by heavy rainfall. This necessitates the importation of labour from neighbouring villages which has had its impact on wage rates. Whereas money wages for the agricultural labourers rise during harvesting seasons because of the increased demands for labour, the number of workers seeking employment has been swollen both by the poor and lower-middle peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara and by labourers from neighbouring villages. Thus a large number of labourers find employment for a relatively brief harvesting season, but wages go down because of increase in number of seasonal labourers.

The labour force, then, is composed of the landless poor, of poor peasants and of lower-middle peasants. As

the poor peasants own a negligible proportion of land, the difference between them and the landless poor is minimal. On the other hand, the bottom range of the middle peasant group is also forced to subscribe to agricultural labouring as an occupation, even if only on a short term seasonal basis because their incomes from the land are declining and need to be supplemented by other activities. This creates a tendency towards the homogenization of the labour force itself, due principally it seems to the rationalization of production and the replacement of labour-intensive and poorly-capitalized agriculture with new capital-intensive agriculture. The result is three-fold: 1. the agricultural labourers see themselves as one in terms of their fate; 2. wage labour becomes a predominant force and affects the differing attitudes the poor peasants and the lower-middle peasants hold about each other; and, 3. because of their circumstances, poor and lower-middle peasants tend to share some of the characteristics of proletarian status. This has its impact on social relations and behaviour patterns. The economy employs a variety of relations of production: capitalist (wage labour-force), semi-capitalist (seasonal wage employment) and pre-capitalist or transitional (share-cropping and other tenancy arrangements). Different combinations of relations of production are employed simultaneously. These combinations focus on the relationship between the capitalist and pre-capitalist sectors and such combinations of relations manifest the class content of particular social formations. The peasants (poor and middle) live in close proximity to the landless,

wage-earning, agricultural labourers. The latter's economic position identifies them as a rural proletariat rather than as belonging to the peasantry. But in addition to wage labour, the landless earn their livelihood as share-croppers. The poor and the lower-middle peasants, in addition to cultivation, earn their living as wage-labourers. This simultaneous, alternating participation in occupations makes it difficult to segregate a rural proletariat analytically from a peasantry. As Mintz comments,

> "the question is not one merely of enumerating the different 'types' which make up the rural sector of a society containing peasants, but also of probing the relationships among such groups, so as to better understand what those relationships impart to the specific definition of each type" (Mintz, 1973, p.95).

The point is that the peasants are not homogeneous and "that their internal differentiation plays a critical role in the ways they are (and become, and remain) peasants" (ibid, p.95). Nevertheless, the people of these three sectors have certain common economic characteristics: they lack productive property (especially land), they are involved to a lesser or greater extent in wage labour, and they are dependent upon the rich and upper-middle peasants. The nature of their production relations critically shapes their attitudes towards life (Meszaros, 1971, pp. 85-127). Thus rural proletar-iats co-exist with other peasant groups and mutually reinforce each other. It is true that various tenurial

relations and kin ties conceal the actual situation but the nature of production relations (and property relations) affects the quality of those relations.[1]

4.2.2.1 Artisans and Petty Traders

Let us first consider those households involved in petty production such as basket weaving, the making of rope and straw products and gur (treacle) making. Capital resources for such production are minimal and the skills involved are traditional. The technique of production is labour-intensive and a certain degree of division of labour is possible because of the involvement of women and children. Marketing possibilities are limited and competition variable. The demands for baskets, rope and straw products are declining because of the availability of cheap urban products, made, for example, from aluminium. There is also the problem of too many competitors vying with each other for a limited market. This results in a fall in aggregate demand.

The economic significance of these occupations is minimal and surpluses are low. As there are no alternative investment opportunities open to these households, in most cases they consume any small surpluses they acquire rather than save. Why then, do households continue in these activities? As there is no real cost of labour, the marginal returns are greater in a period of no alternative employment. Again, those households which depend on these occupations for a major proportion of their income

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1. This will be treated in greater detail in Chapter V.

are adversely affected by cheap urban products. These occupations are phased out depending on the speed of the emergence of capitalism.

Petty trading involves vegetables and milk selling. Savar is the focal point of the vegetable trade. This trade is controlled by three people. One of them is Tobarak Hossain of Mirabo. All three are involved in politics, possess arms and have sufficient capital. Since vegetables are perishable goods, the petty traders must dispose of them rapidly to larger scale middlemen, and being afraid of arms, they are forced to accept prices offered to them by these three monopolists who have cold storage facilities and who supply vegetables to the Dacca market.

Shop keeping is one of the multifarious activities of the poor households involved. These shops are usually run by women or boys. The products for sale include biri, bangles, gur, salt, etc. The working capital is minimal, and, if needed, can be borrowed from the village money lender. In most cases these shops are temporary ventures and investment is minimal. When the households are unemployed, they set up shops. When better employment opportunities present themselves, they close shop. Such activities are stop-gap arrangements, preferable to unemployment, although the marginal returns are below the daily consumption rate. The shops serve as alternative employment opportunities in seasons when there is no work. Sometimes families move out in the lean months and work at brick kilns in and around Savar and Manikgonj.

4.2.3.1 Technology-linked Occupations

These include masonry, tractor-driving and repairing, deep tube well fitting and repairing. Although these occupations are technology-linked, they are restricted to skills learned on the job. Some occupations require sophisticated skills, such as tractor-overhauling and servicing, but these skills are not available in the village. They are obtainable either at Savar Dairy Farm or at Dacca. The option of the poor household is to learn by doing, though the impact of the new technology in this area is significant. The jobs at Savar Dairy Farm are not open. As the farm is government-run, the minimum qualifications are a polytechnic diploma, and all institutions granting such diplomas are located in urban centres. For economic reasons, the members of poor households cannot afford to go to Dacca for extended periods to gain the required level of skill and sophistication. Boro Dewan's tractor driver is a school student. He is from a poor peasant family in Mirabo. From on-the-job experience, he has learned elementary tractor servicing and repairing. He hopes to get a polytechnic diploma, provided his family can send him to Dacca. I asked his father about this. He said: "I have no objection. But I have no money. I have a tiny plot of land. I cannot sell it for his sake. I have others to look after. I tried to give him an education here in school. I cannot afford to send him to Dacca." Then I asked the son. He said: "I know our financial position. I will try to get a 'lodging' in Dacca and finish my course." "What will you do then?" "I will try to get a job as a mechanic somewhere, or if I

can manage some capital I will open an electrical fitting and repairing shop in Savar. I like doing this type of work."

4.2.3.2 Employment linked with Administration

These occupations are mainly clerical work, low-level administrative jobs associated with the Union Council and the post-office, and school teaching. From Tables 16 and 17, we find that these occupations are the monopoly of the rich and the middle peasants. The same is the case for the pattern of higher education in the village. Mirabo school has ten teachers. Six are from Mirabo and Nayapara and four are outsiders. Of the six local teachers, one is from the Dewan family and two are from the Bepari family in Mirabo; two are from the Sarkar family and one from the Talukdar family in Nayapara. All six belong to the rich and middle peasant groups. The clerk to the Union Council is an outsider. One school-teacher acts as a part-time postmaster. He is also from a middle peasant family in Mirabo.

Tables 16 and 17 make it clear that the poor peasant households are attracted to technology-linked occupations, whereas the rich and middle peasant households gravitate to employment linked with administration.

4.3 Economic Options of the Poor Peasant

There are three economic options open to the poor peasant households:

4.3.1 Sale of land and other resources

Land, cows, buffaloes and trees are the saleable

capital owned by the poor peasant household. In a bad harvest or flood, they generally sell the cattle and timber and sometimes they mortgage a portion of their land in order to postpone the shock of outright sale of land. In the reference period of 1974, however, during the famine, poor peasants were forced to sell rather than to mortgage their lands and to become total paupers.[1]

4.3.2 Loans

Poor peasant households generally take loans from their rich neighbours or money lenders. In both Mirabo and Nayapara, the rich peasants are the money lenders. Money lenders are able to make fairly accurate assessments of the repaying capacity of the borrowing households. The rates of interest are high (i.e. between thirty and forty percent). Most of the amount borrowed is spent on consumption purposes; and in this respect the situation in Mirabo and Nayapara does not differ from that found in other parts of Bangladesh (Government of East Pakistan, 1966, p.52).

4.3.3 Migration

The ultimate option of the poor peasant household is to migrate permanently to Dacca or to other district towns. After the liberation, until the first half of 1974, poor households refused to move despite consecutive bad harvests. The reasons for the reluctance to migrate were: 1. for the poor peasant, moving out is linked with uncertainty and insecurity; 2. living is more expensive in towns; 3. the small amount of land possessed by the poor household gives relative security as against the

1. This will be enlarged upon in Chapter V.

casual labour market in towns. In the reference period, these households struck a balance. In certain cases some individuals migrated to the towns, leaving their families in the village; and, in this way, they were able to send small amounts of money to their home village to assist their families. In other cases, households moved out collectively to work at the brick kilns at Manikgonj for particular seasons. During the famine of 1974, two households sold their lands and migrated permanently. (This will be elaborated in Chapter V.) The present trend is to migrate to the towns, leaving families behind in the village.

4.4 Middle Peasants

The middle peasants have land holdings of ten to twenty-five bighas and farm resources. They have a small amount of capital as a result of savings. The relation between savings and the production process is established through fixed capital, working capital and a fund for the purchase of inputs (seeds, fertilizer), and other resources (tools, sheds, etc.). If there is insufficient capital for such assets, then they can be borrowed from others. Here in the village, savings, investment production and consumption production are parts of a continuing process. The resources of the middle peasant are limited. Once his crops are damaged by drought or by unseasonable rains or floods, he is forced to sell his cattle and to mortgage a portion of his lands. If the crops are destroyed several seasons running, the middle peasant has no choice but to sell some of his land

and thus become a poor peasant. A crucial element is jo. the right time for a particular activity, whether it is sowing, weeding or harvesting. Although the middle peasant owns land, he may not have sufficient capital to buy seeds for sowing. The demand for seed, and consequently the price, increases during the sowing season. The increased price often places the seed beyond the means of the middle peasant. Although he may not be able to sow all his lands, he will usually be able to sow a portion of his land at the right time (jo). A slight deviation in the time of sowing, weeding or harvesting from the most propitious can make the peasant's investment of labour and capital redundant. If sowing is delayed, rains coming at the wrong time for the crop can bring disaster. If weeding is not carried out at the appropriate moment, it remains undone and affects the crop yield. Sometimes, because of slight variations from jo , the crops are ruined by floods. To pay close attention to jo is essential. Take the examples of Zahed Dewan and Torab Sarkar, middle peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara. Both own ten bigha of land and have equal-sized families of five members. During the reference period of 1974, Torab failed to procure seeds and to sow in good time. His harvesting was thus delayed and subsequently damaged by flooding. There had been bad harvests every year since 1972. The cumulative effect of successive harvest failures was to force Torab initially to sell two cows and a bamboo grove, and to borrow 500 takas for consumption

purposes from a money lender at thirty percent interest. Eventually, Torab had to sell three bigha of land and was thus reduced to the status of a poor peasant and a debtor. Zahed, on the other hand, because of judicial _jo_ , made a profit selling rice, bought one bigha of land, constructed a new cow shed and began lending small sums of money.

From the above it becomes clear that, for most of the middle peasant households, there is little margin over immediate consumption needs to allow them to accrue savings. The link between savings-investment and the production-process is dynamic and centres on the crop cycles. As short-term, medium-term and long-term assets (Alamgir, 1975) are dependent on natural and environmental factors including the initial socio-cultural and economic resource endownment of the households, the middle peasants are not in a position to plan effectively for the future. But there are exceptions. Samed Sarkar is a middle peasant of Nayapara. His son, A.R. Sarkar, works in the Information Ministry. During the 1960's, the government initiated deep-tube well irrigation, and decided to build one in the highlands of Mirabo and Nayapara. A.R. Sarkar urged his father to sell his lands near the _bydes_ and the neighbouring village and either to buy a plot in the highlands or to exchange his land with someone owning a plot in the highlands. The high-land plots were less fertile because of lack of irrigation. Everyone thought Samed was mad to exchange fertile lands for less fertile ones. Samed acted on his son's advice. He is now reaping the benefits, since the irrigated high-

lands are yielding a three-crop cycle annually instead of the two-crop cycles in other areas. Again, there is the case of Neyamat Bepari, who converted his fifteen bigha of rice lands into sugarcane cultivation. The market price of gur made from sugarcane is higher than that for rice; and the cultivation of sugarcane is less hazardous as there is less dependency on nature and jo . This transition to a commercial crop has made him more market-oriented and conscious of supply and demand in urban areas. He has bought a shop at Savar bazaar to distribute gur over a wide area. He buys gur from the neighbouring villages. Generally he offers five bigha of land for share-cropping on an annual contract basis. He also lends money. The three factors of money lending, share-cropping and forward marketing have changed his pattern of investment. In all three, funds flow in cash and kind and he uses them in the form of direct investment in tradeable capital assets. This kind of traditional operation of the rural capital market acts as a dynamic force behind the income growth of this kind of household.

The cases cited above point to the formation of rural capital in the agrarian economy by the particular acts of men. This implies that the present dissolution of peasant forms of economy in some areas of the village has not resulted directly from the penetration of industrial capitalism but rather is due to the formation of capital in the rural areas and the commercialization of different crops.

4.5 Rich Peasants

There are five rich peasant households in Mirabo and six in Nayapara. Of these eleven households, ten have agriculture as their primary occupation. The household of Boro Dewan differs from the other ten, and will be discussed in detail later. The eleven rich households own 750 bigha of land. Three households each own tube wells and one owns a tractor. Another household owns a flour mill at Asulia bazaar. Out of the twenty bamboo groves owned in the two villages, fifteen are owned by ten of the rich peasant households. The rich peasants possess fifty of the seventy draught cattle in the village. It is significant that rich peasants own a large proportion of the fixed productive capital of the village. Five of the rich peasant households own shops at Savar, Kasimpur, Yarpur and Asulia bazaars. Money lending is the secondary occupation of all eleven rich households.

Almost all the lands of rich peasants in Mirabo and Nayapara are irrigated by deep-tube wells and power pumps. They use high-yielding seeds and chemical fertilizer. They produce more commercial crops such as sugarcane and vegetables, and are more market oriented, employing hired labour for cultivation. In the reference period, they declined to rent out any of their lands on a share-cropping basis, preferring to cultivate them by hired labour. In place of the traditional varieties of rice, they opt for IRRI-8 and IRRI-20. Table 22 compares the level of production for two rich peasant households owning 100 bighas of land.

Table 22 : The total yearly production of two rich peasant households (1973)

Name of the family	Total yearly production					Total yearly sale of vegetables		
	Land holding	Rice (mds)	Sugarcane (mds)	Mustard (mds)	Jute (mds)	Chilli	Others	Total
Boro Dewan	100 bigha	800	1,000	20	50	4,000 takas	2,000 takas	6,000 takas
Peer Sarkar	100 bigha	760	715	15	15	4,000 takas	3,000 takas	7,000 takas

The rich peasants profit both from "commercial surplus" and from "distressed surplus" (Narain, 1961). The commercial surplus is that which the rich peasant regularly sells to the market. Distressed surplus refers to the crops that the poor peasants and a section of the middle peasants are forced out of poverty, to sell to rich peasant traders. Also, because of their weaker economic position, the poor and lower-middle peasants have to borrow from the rich money lending peasants.

> "And once he falls into the clutches of the money lender it becomes difficult for him to get out of them, so that his debt obligations become a continuing source of pressure to acquire more cash, through a 'distress sale' of his own produce" (ibid, p.36).

Thus the poor peasants and a section of the middle peasants, due to pressure of circumstances, sell a large volume of their crops at harvest time and again borrow cash or grain for consumption later in the year. In order to survive, they either sell commercial crops at a lower price to the rich peasants or sell food grains, only to buy them back again, in most cases, at a higher price, again re-borrowing to enable them to do so. The rich peasants become wealthy in the process. During the reference period, cereal prices were higher than in pre-liberation days. They were also relatively higher than the prices of industrial products. This was then a favourable period for agriculture. The benefits derived by the rich peasants from advantageous agricultural terms is reflected in the concentration of land ownership and control over land.

All eleven rich peasant households bought land in the reference period (Record of land transactions, Savar). In Mirabo, Boro Dewan purchased thirty bigha of land in addition to his "official" holding of one hundred bigha; in Nayapara the head of the Sarkar family bought twenty bigha of land beyond his "official" holding of one hundred bigha; and the rest acquired ten to fifteen bigha in addition to their holdings after liberation. Of twenty-three poor peasants in Mirabo, ten have had to sell a portion of their lands since 1971. The same is true for two of the three poor peasants of Nayapara, fifteen of the sixty middle peasants of Mirabo and five of the eleven middle peasants of Nayapara. The rich peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara bought these lands and also those of neighbouring villagers.

There is another method of extending control over land. Because of laws on maximum land ownership and of political pressure, the rich peasants often prefer to take over mortgages on land rather than purchases outright. They then rent out the same land to the owner on a share-cropping basis. Boro Dewan has used this method and has thus extended his control over the poor peasants and some of the middle peasants. He has stopped renting out his own land for share-cropping and has brought them under his own cultivation, giving priority to commercial crops. However, he rents out mortgaged land for share-cropping and thus extends his control over individuals and their resources and uses them for political purposes. The case of Boro Dewan will be considered in greater detail later in Chapter VII.

The rich peasant households take every advantage of education. The acquisition of an education gives status and is dependent upon a particular family's financial standing. Rich households are therefore in a favourable position from the standpoint of education and of access to new types of occupation. Individual members have taken up infra-structural jobs in towns and they established important urban connections. These connections are vital for governmental rural development strategies, credit facilities, etc., and "power in the towns automatically becomes power in the countryside" (Gramsci, 1973).

The rich peasants choose the economic advantages of large-scale capitalist farming. The concentration of and control over land, the deployment of resources and the use of improved techniques of cultivation point to this. Again, the adoption of new forms of technology and limited mechanization by the rich peasants are aided by the governmental rural development strategies by the cooperatives and by the system of agricultural credit. Under the Comilla Cooperative system, the minimum land holding for membership is half an acre and credit is generally restricted to those who can provide evidence of financial guarantees (Bose, 1974). Assessment of repayment capacity and, on the other hand, the notion of minimum land holdings debar the poor peasants and the tenants from such benefits. The availability of cooperative finance and loans from the Agricultural Development Bank have made it possible for the rich peasant households to invest in fixed goods to a greater extent. They borrow from the Cooperatives and from the A.D.B. at a lower rate, whereas the poor peasants and the tenants must borrow from the

unorganized rural capital market at a high rate of interest controlled by the rich peasants. This access to state finance enjoyed by rich households is crucial, because these institutions have become additional sources of privilege by the power elite in the rural areas. Table 23 gives a picture of the use of modern production inputs in Bangladesh. As explained above all the bulk of this institutional assistance is enjoyed by the rural rich households. In a later section I will also demonstrate how the rich and the upper-middle peasants dominate the managing committee of the Cooperatives and the Union Council and how they therefore obtain the major portion of credit facilities. In addition, they are the largest defaulters on repayment. In 1973, the government of Bangladesh introduced a bill concerning tax on agricultural produce. Obviously this bill could have most affected the rich peasant class. However, the government was forced to withdraw it due to pressure from the agricultural power bloc in Parliament. A similar point has been made by Byres who observed that "rural bloc operates in favour of rich peasants, and small and medium landlords. It is they who benefit from favourable terms of trade and high procurement prices. Poor peasants and landless labourers have to buy food grains and they suffer, therefore, along with urban consumers, from high food prices" (Byres, 1974, p. 252).

This bias results from the composition and operation of political institutions. A survey carried out by the Political Science Department, Dacca University, regarding the social origin, source of income and occupation of the

Table 23 : Use of modern production inputs in Bangladesh

Year	Chemical fertilizer (lakh tons)	Improved seeds from B.A.D.C. (lakh tons)		Lift power pump (thousands)	Extension worker (thousands)	Pesticides (thousand tons)	Investment from Loan-Giving agencies (croes taka)			
		Rice	Potato				Agrl. Bank	Agrl. coop.	Takavi	Total
1955-56	0.02	-	-	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
1957-58	0.27	-	-	0.5	4.5	-	0.4	-	-	-
1959-60	0.49	-	-	1.1	4.5	-	1.9	-	-	-
1961-62	0.67	-	-	1.5	5.7	-	4.0	2.2	4.6	10.8
1963-64	1.11	0.51	0.54	2.5	5.9	-	3.9	3.4	3.5	10.8
1965-66	1.29	0.54	0.72	3.4	5.6	3.0	4.1	1.8	0.9	7.8
1967-68	2.27	0.59	0.80	6.5	6.1	3.3	6.5	1.5	7.0	15.0
1969-70	2.77	0.72	0.54	17.8	7.9	5.1	10.6	3.0	12.4	26.0
1970-71	3.04	1.01	-	24.5	-	4.0	-	-	-	-
1971-72	2.40	3.74	-	-	-	4.0	-	-	-	-

Source: Government of Bangladesh, Annual Plan 1973-74, pp. 29, 33, 53;

Statistical Digest 1970-71, pp. 68-71;

Economic Survey of East Pakistan 1969-70, pp. 43, 45, 46, 49.

B.A.D.C. - Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation
Agrl. Bank - Agricultural Bank
Agrl. Coop. - Agricultural Cooperative

members of the Parliament of Bangladesh revealed that 75 percent of the members own more than 6.5 acres of land; they are either rich or upper-middle peasants. Some form of trade is almost always their secondary source of income.

Tables 24 and 25 point that 26 percent MPs in 1970 and 30 percent MPs in 1973 are owners of more than 25 acres of land and 10 percent of the MPs are owners of more than 40 acres of land. The tables reveal a shift of political and social power to the rich peasants and they have shown themselves capable of exercising political power not only at village level, but also at national level. Since the liberation, the Government of Bangladesh has tried from time to time to introduce levies in the rural areas and to procure rice at a reduced rate. Yet each attempt was frustrated by the powerful rich rural bloc within Parliament. Bell has discussed the same problem in the context of India: "All producers in agriculture with a net surplus to sell obviously want high prices for their outputs (basically, food grains and fibres) and low prices for their industrially produced inputs (chemical fertilizers and pesticides, pumping sets and electricity or diesel fuel). Low prices for certain industrial consumer goods are important for all rural households, be they surplus or deficit - even the most impoverished tenant or landless labourer has to buy cloth and kerosene for his family. In this simple sense, their interest and especially those of the rich rural households are diametrically opposed to urban ones. But the question is not primarily about the level and determination of the barter terms of

Table 24 : Landholding of the Members of Parliament

Year of Election	Less than 1 acre	Less than 3 acres	3-6.4 acres	6.5-10.4 acres	10.5-15.4 acres	15.5-25.5 acres	25.6-40 acres	Above 40 acres	Total
1970 MPs	2 0.87%	23 10.08%	41 17.98%	38 16.66%	29 12.71%	34 14.91%	38 16.66%	23 10.08%	228
1973 MPs	3 1.26%	26 10.97%	30 12.65%	32 13.50%	25 10.54%	49 20.67%	48 20.25%	24 10.12%	237

Table 25 : Occupational Background of the Members of Parliament

Year of Election	Lawyer	Businessmen	Landlord	Farmer	Service	Teacher	Doctor	Politics	Other	Total
1970 MPs	79 29.47%	72 26.86%	12 4.47%	34 12.68%	7 2.61%	25 9.32%	20 7.46%	14 5.22%	5 1.86%	268
1973 MPs	75 26.50%	67 23.67%	8 2.82%	42 14.84%	2 0.70%	28 9.89%	15 5.30%	35 12.72%	11 3.88%	283

Source : Rounaq Jahan, 1976, Members of Parliament in Bangladesh, Legislative Studies Quarterly, Summer.

trade preceding and following the reform. It is about the distribution of property rights and control over land. Thus, in the rural sector, the urban-rural dimension of conflict is subordinate to, and derives from, the struggle between opposed rural classes" (Bell, 1974, pp. 195-196).

The message is clear. In the case of Bangladesh, the strong and increasingly powerful class of rich peasants and upper-middle peasants are on their way to becoming capitalists and extending their political power. Following Bell, we may conclude that

> "because of the existing structure of inequality in agriculture, which could well be worsened by the spread of 'green revolution' technology, only a comparatively small fraction of the extra agricultural output so generated will go to the rural poor, who consume food relatively intensely. Of the remainder, some will be consumed by the producing households, that is, kulak ones; but a large fraction must be sold either to the urban sector or in foreign markets to pay for 'new' inputs and to satisfy the kulaks' desire for industrial consumer goods now that their incomes are rising. At the margin, therefore, the marketed surplus is likely to be highly responsive to change in output. It follows immediately that the form of technical change may have profound political consequences in that it will increase the economic dependence of productive units in agriculture on national bourgeois interests and designs. A further effect is that the growth of intersectoral

transactions for the purposes of agricultural production as well as rural household's consumption will further promote capitalist development in agriculture and hence in the economy as a whole" (ibid, pp. 205-206).

Table 26 eloquently illustrates Bell's contention.

Table 26 : Saleable surplus rice (in aggregate), 1973-1974

Peasant type	Produced rice	Amount of Rice (in lakh tons) For seeds, cattle fodder & other uses	Net produce	Home consumption	Saleable surplus
Poor Peasant	27.14	2.71	24.43	51.66	-27.73
Middle Peasant	55.46	5.55	49.91	30.24	19.67
Rich Peasant	35.40	3.54	31.86	6.06	25.80
Total	118.00	11.80	106.20	87.96	45.47

Source: Akhlaqur Rahman, Bangladesher Krishite danotontrater Bikash, p.37, Samikhon Pustika, Dacca, 1974.

Rahman averaged the net rice production of 1969-70 for the different peasant-operated farms and divided into the different types of peasant farms. He subtracted ten percent from the net produce for seeds, cattle fodder and other uses. The annual consumption of food is per capita 0.18 ton. On this basis, he estimated the annual consumption of the total population of the different farms. By subtracting the home consumption from the net produce, he was able to calculate the saleable surplus. The annual food deficit of the poor peasants is 27.23 lakh tons. They have to buy supplementary food from the open market. The saleable surplus rice of the middle peasants and the rich peasants are 19.67 lakh tons and 25.80 lakh tons

respectively. Their total saleable surplus is therefore 45.47 lakh tons. This surplus, amounting to about 38.5 percent of total production, they have to sell. Because of "distress selling", the poor peasants and others are forced to buy more than half their consumption from the market. In contrast, the produce of the rich and middle peasants can be sold to the market at any time. For this reason, the produce for home consumption plays an important role towards determining the market price. Stockpiles of produce for consumption become a commodity for sale.

Bell's observation and Rahman's analysis both point these movements in the marketed surplus and in the inter-sectoral terms of trade must be understood in relation to the changing agrarian structure. The control over marketed surplus and the benefit from favourable terms of trade operate in favour of rich peasants and they maintain the 'rural bias' through the exercise of political power.[1]

4.6 Distribution and Operation of Power

The foregoing discussion suggests that differentiation in the economic structure conditions the distribution and operation of power in the political structure. In this section then, an attempt is made to analyse the political

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1. It is to be stressed that economically 'rural bias' operates in favour of rich peasants. They benefit from favourable terms of trade and high prices for marketable surplus. Poor peasants and landless labourers, as I have shown, are forced to buy food grains and they suffer, along with urban consumers from high food prices. Politically 'rural bias' operates in shifting terms of trade in favour of agriculture. The alliance and the conflict between the urban bourgeoisie bent upon industrialization and the greatly strengthened rich peasant class eager to maintain terms of trade favourable to agriculture will determine the future pattern of industrialization of Bangladesh.

power of the rural rich and how this is reinforced by their links with the dominant political parties and the governmental functionaries. I also assess the prospects for collective action on the part of the poor and landless peasants and discuss their links with the underground political parties.

In Mirabo and Nayapara, formal power is located in structures such as the Union Council, political parties and the cooperatives. Mirabo and Nayapara come under the Yarpur Union Council. The council members are elected by universal adult franchise. The Chairman is from Mirabo and "officially" owns one hundred bigha of land. He is a land speculator. The Vice-Chairman from Taiyubpur is a L.M.F.[1] doctor and has forty bigha of land. The remaining members are: a businessman from Tajpur, a peasant from Gorat, each owning thirty bigha of land; a peasant from Gasbag who holds twenty-five bigha of land; two peasants from Yarpur, one owning sixty bigha of land and the other fifteen bigha; and a businessman from Mirabo who has twenty-five bigha of land. It is significant that the council membership is composed of rich and middle peasants. In addition to cultivation, they have interests in trading. The Union Council is the lowest rung of the administration. It has the power to impose taxes for development and it is through the Council that the state channels its aid. So the composition of the Council is important from the standpoint both of political and economic forces. Table 27 gives a breakdown of the composition of the Union Council.

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1. Licentiate medical faculty

Table 27 : Composition of the Union Council

Member	Land Holding	Occupation
Chairman	100 bigha	Land speculation
Vice-Chairman	40 bigha	L.M.F. doctor
Member A	30 bigha	Businessman
Member B	30 bigha	Peasant
Member C	50 bigha	Peasant
Member D	25 bigha	Peasant
Member E	60 bigha	Peasant
Member F	15 bigha	Peasant
Member G	25 bigha	Businessman

The new agricultural Cooperative Society comprising Mirabo and Nayapara was established in 1970. It has forty-seven members, all owning between fifteen and one hundred bigha of land. The annual subscription is five takas, with a monthly subscription of twelve annas. Through the Cooperative, the government channels aid, fertilizers and improved seeds. The members are elected by vote, on the condition that they own at least half an acre of land. Extension workers from the Kasimpur Agricultural Estate come from time to time to help them plant improved seeds, or to talk to the members about improved methods of cultivation. It is significant that the poor peasants and the landless have no connection with the operations of the cooperative.

National political parties have their branches at Savar. The Chairman of the Union Council is a member of the National Awami Party; and the Vice-Chairman and five members of the Union Council are members of the Awami

League. The allegiances of the students of Mirabo High School are divided into three groups: 1, Students' League, the student wing of the Awami League; 2. Students' Union, the student wing of the National Awami Party; and 3. the underground Left party.

The Awami League, the ruling party, is based traditionally on a coalition of urban interests, rich peasant interests and "volunteers" (cf. Gramsci, 1973). The rich peasants have direct linkages with the urban areas. Many of them have become part of the newly-formed urbanized business class, student groups or civil servants. This establishes the relationship between the party and the dominant rich peasants in the countryside. On the other hand, "volunteers" are:

> "those who have detached themselves from the mass by arbitrary individual initiative, and who often stand in opposition to that mass or are neutral with respect to it" (Gramsci, 1973, p. 203).

These volunteers are important groups in the Awami League. They are

> "in a certain sense of déclassés; they have never or almost never represented homogeneous social blocks" (ibid, pp. 203-204).

During the war of liberation, these volunteers took an active part in it, but after the war, they became untrustworthy and mercenary, adhering formally to the Awami League and exercising authority arbitrarily.

At the village level, Tobarak Hossain is such a "volunteer". He has grabbed three shops at Savar bazaar

and has forcibly occupied twenty bigha of land from three rich and middle peasants in Mirabo and Nayapara. He has invested money in the vegetable and grain trades. Though he is from the Dewan family, his relationship with Boro Dewan is bitter and he acts independently and autonomously. Because of the "volunteer" nature of the Awami League, he represents a bloc in the party. He has no link with the party branch at Savar but has direct adcess to central authority in Dacca. On another plane, he acts as a barrier between the underground Left and the Establishment. Since the underground Left is supplied with arms, Tobarak Hossain counteracts them with arms; and, because he is so armed, the rich peasants of the area sometimes seek his help for anti-social purposes. Thus he is mercenary and unreliable, but operates autonomously.

The National Awami Party is a Moscow-oriented Socialist Party. Boro Dewan's nephew is a journalist in Dacca and a thorough-bred socialist. He has considerable personal influence over Boro Dewan. The present member in the national Parliament for this constituency is from Asulia. He is a member of the Awami League and a long-standing rival of Boro Dewan, who competes with him for leadership of the area. This may account for Boro Dewan's allegiance to the National Awami Party. Whereas the Awami League has a rural bias, the National Awami Party is a splinter group of the Awami League. The two parties differ little on policy for the restructuring society, merely exhibiting slightly different emphasis.[1]

1. On politics of the Awami League and the other political parties, see: Ali, 1975; Ahmed, 1973; Forum, March 13, 1971; 6 December 1969; and Alavi, 1971.

The underground Left in Mirabo and Nayapara operates on Mao's principle of encirclement and armed insurrection. Some of the Mirabo high school students, as well as students from colleges at Savar and Manikgonj, and landless peasants are affiliated to the Left. The students are from poor and middle peasant families. They distribute clandestine leaflets in the bazaars. From time to time, the underground Left kill the "anti-social" elements in the area. They have for example, assassinated Harun Mia, a cloth merchant, (in the reference period, there was a scarcity of rice, cloth, kerosene and salt); Ruhul Talukdar, a rice trader; Salam Mia, a road contractor; and Sohag Ali, a member of Tobarak Hossain's gang. After each killing, the police, accompanied by the Rakhi Bahini, came to the village. However, the villagers were uncooperative, either because their own relations were involved or because they feared reprisals from the Left.

The landless, the poor peasants and the lower-middle peasants have formed a Krisak Samity (Peasants' Association) in the village. The underground Left infiltrated the Samity and help to formulate work action and slogans. They try to protect themselves as share-croppers and to organize themselves to obtain fertilizer and improved seeds and to press for fair wages as agricultural labourers.

Thus we find in the village that while the rich and middle peasants continue their fight for ascendancy within the existing agrarian system, there also exists a militant tradition which has found expression in peasant movements and underground activities. There are, in addition, "voluntary" activities within the system, resulting from

the social formation of the national political parties. The clash among the three groups is focussed on violent means and thus the village is drawn into the mainstream of national politics.

So far, I have described the actual political alignments. Now I will try to explain these alignments in terms of the exercise of power. This derives fundamentally from the control of means of production. Both the Union Council and the Cooperative are dominated by the rich peasants. There is keen competition for controlling positions. The leaders spend money in order to secure votes, put pressure to bear on kinship linkages, distribute favours in the form of doles to the distressed or land to share-croppers. During the Union Council election, for instance, two candidates from Mirabo stood for membership. One was Boro Dewan, the other, Niaz Dewan, both kinsmen. Niaz Dewan manipulated his kinship network and organized more than half the vote in Mirabo in his favour. Boro Dewan entered into an alliance with Nayapara, where most of the land is sited on the high ground. Boro Dewan promised them the facilities of the power-pump if he were elected. This tactic had its impact on Mirabo. Those who owned plots in the highlands entered into a secret pact with Boro Dewan, extracting from him the promise of use of the power-pump; and ultimately, Boro Dewan won the election.[1]

As members of the same class compete in the arena, political competition takes the form of factional struggles.

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1. For details see Chapter VIII

The central point of this type of politics is that "factionalism" cuts through class alignments. Recruitment and leadership are important for an examination of factions (Bailey, 1963, 1969; Nicholas, 1963, 1965, 1966, 1968). According to Alavi,

> "An important aspect of factional conflict is that rival factions are, in general, structurally similar, namely that they represent similar configurations of social groups, although that is by no means always the case. Where that is so, the faction model describes a segmental rather than class conflict. Such conflicts, therefore, do not have an ideological expression, because rival factions, or faction leaders, fight for control over resources, power and status as available within the existing framework of society rather than for changes in the social structure" (Alavi, 1973, p. 44).

Thus we find that the fight for control of the Union Council and of the Cooperatives is a fight for the control of funds, seeds, fertilizers, tube-wells and power-pumps. On another plane, the rich peasants, in order to secure an environment for productive investments, seek alliance with the towns and administration through political parties and contacts. The emergence of the "volunteers" in the village scene does not rule this out. The "volunteers" are not fighting to change the social structure; they use arms in place of money, favours and the kinship network for the control of productive investments. The clash between them and faction leaders is for

the control of resources. However, the formation of the Krisak Samity and the activities of the militant students and the underground Left are indicative more of horizontal cleavages and of a desire to radically restructure society than of factionalism, though the latter may also be important situationally. The emergence of Krisak Samity therefore represents a shift in the structure of power and points to the emergence of polarization and structural antagonism in place of vertical relationships of inter-dependence.

The ideology of land reform, the state subsidies and the formal structure of power are all geared to the dominant interests of the rural sector. Land reform has helped to strengthen a rich peasant class, and the state subsidies are assisting them to increase their wealth and profits. The formal power structure legitimize their hegemony over rural areas. Within the power structure there is a constant battle for possession of control of production among various groups and simultaneously there is a challenge which is developing from outside the structure. Thus we find both a continual shifting of alliances within one class for the control of production and the development of a class struggle involving horizontal cleavages within the village.

The last part of this chapter has been devoted to showing the close relationship between control of means of

production and political power.[1] The rich peasants in the rural areas possess the means of production, and at the same time control the formal positions of political authority, possess better incomes, and have better access to material benefits. The access to political power is crucial, because those who possess it also possess the means by which to enforce any changes they may wish or by which to maintain the status quo. Since the government agricultural strategies in the Bangladesh context do not entail major changes in social and economic organization we find two inter-linked situations: 1. a distribution of power among the dominant social groups in the existing socio-economic system, and 2. as the existing social organization increasingly fails to solve basic conflicts and economic dilemmas, an increase in class-based political action. However, the state is not a fixed entity. Structural change among the peasantry inevitably transforms the complexion of the state. It is true that resources are distributed among the peasantry by the state, but it is crucial to understand the social and political impact of this distribution as well as why the

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1. Galeski summed up the position: 'We could say today that control over means of production and political power (or political power and control of the means of production) are increasingly inseparable and this unity is the main source of all other social inequalities. The situation of each social group is not determined solely by its access to the control over means of production, but in its access to political power as well. The notion of social class, if understood in economic terms only, is not a sufficiently scientific tool today (and in fact never was) to study social conflicts because social conflicts simultaneously emerge from the inequality of access to political power' (Galeski, 1972, pp. 281-2).

state choose one pattern of distribution and not another. Seen in this way the institutions of the state are themselves the result of political and economic forces. Since the state programmes for rural development are not above social conflict, all programmes of development, in the end, can be interpreted as involving the struggle for political power. The institutions of the state derive power from certain social forces. These forces exist in the rural areas as well as elsewhere. From this standpoint the state becomes a reflection of the forces which differentiate the village into classes or various groups.

At this point it is imperative to analyse village political structure and process. Bailey (1963, 1969) and Nicholas, (1963, 1965, 1966, 1968) have extensively studied factional alignments and recruitment. The concept of faction, as used by them, describes the existing political alignments but does not sufficiently explain them. Their analysis is confined largely to the village and rules out the significance of social divisions existing throughout the rural social formation. Furthermore, factional conflicts or competition operate in a situation where resources are static or scarce. In such a situation it is more appropriate to compete for control over existing, known resources and to organize to protect one's possessions (e.g. exclusive rights to the labour and service of certain groups at fixed, traditional prices), than to organize in order to generate or secure possession of new resources (i.e. productive investment in high yield producing technology') (Wood, 1974, p.20). But in

a changed situation where an environment for accumulation exists, the concern of the rich peasant is to enter into new alliances. These alliances tend to be based on class interests and extend into the towns and centres of administration.

Thus vertical cleavages (perhaps focussing on family divisions or systems of patronage) in a static village give way to class formation. As concentration of land increases under conditions of new opportunities for increasing agricultural productivity and greater scope for investment in non-agricultural activity, a rich peasant class stabilizes its position on the village terrain. In the changed situation, the position of subsistence peasants becomes weaker through the market economy and through fragmentation due to inheritance and natural disaster. On the other hand, the rich peasants branch out in non-agricultural activities, seek new alliances in the towns and administration and enhance their capacity to establish sons in other forms of employment. This process of class differentiation, stimulated by new opportunities for the accumulation of capital, results in a process of polarization. The latter process forms the focus for analysis in the following chapter.

Chapter V : Polarization

This chapter analyses the polarization process. Polarization occurred through the intervention of the state, through the workings of a deformed capitalist economy and as the result of powerful natural forces. The agricultural development strategies formulated by the state during the colonial and post-colonial periods and the deformed capitalist economy created an agrarian situation whereby a surplus economy was juxtaposed with one of survival. This economy was also subject to the powerful forces of nature which shifted the fortunes of the peasantry and changed the relative positions of peasant households. All these processes took place in a 'class-in-itself'[1] situation where exploitation and extortion did not produce a developed form of class consciousness and a political action.

5.1 The General Perspective

Capitalist development in Bangladesh combines the features of both colonial and class exploitation. Two features were prominent in the socio-economic structure of East Bengal after the establishment of Pakistan. Firstly, the rural structure was dominated by rich and middle peasants; the great majority of them were owners of nearly five acres of land. Secondly, they produced cash crops for the market, mainly jute. The former was largely a consequence of the mass exodus of Hindu landlords and money lenders to India; and the latter resulted in an export-oriented economy and generated the main bulk of foreign exchange. The power structure of Pakistan was

1. See Marx, 1970, 1971; Lukacs, 1971.

based on the landlord-bourgeois bloc in West Pakistan and its military-bureaucratic machinery. This power bloc manipulated state power and re-channelled the surplus generated by East Bengal's agriculture for building import-substitution industries through "free enterprise". Thus agrarian surplus was expropriated to supply "risk" capital for industry based mainly in West Pakistan; the central government controlled the foreign exchange earned by the agricultural east to pay for necessary imports and re-directed rural commodities as raw materials for manufacture. The Pakistani state expropriated the agrarian surplus in two ways: (a) through the state's monopoly of foreign exchange, and (b) through an import licensing system. In the early fifties Pakistan's primary exports were mainly jute and food products. The jute growers of East Bengal, under government regulation, had to surrender the foreign exchange they earned from sales abroad; and in return, they received Pakistani rupees at the official rate. The peasant's surplus thus expropriated by the state was allocated through the import licensing system. The licenses to import and the foreign exchange necessary to pay abroad were offered to the business communities of West Pakistan. They brought in commercial and industrial items to meet consumption needs and industrialize the country. Thus the agricultural producers subsidized the importers.

East Bengal's capital accumulation was lost in this fashion and with it also the spread effects of investment. East Bengal became a colony within the state structure of Pakistan and class stratification deepened within a

relatively egalitarian peasant society of East Bengal. The metropolitan economy of Karachi and the Punjab exploited the colonial base of East Bengal and a rich peasant class gradually emerged there (Nations, 1971; Sobhan, 1968; Griffin, 1965). The import-substitution industries of West Pakistan exported to East Bengal light to intermediary and producer goods such as cotton and woollen textiles, silk products, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, footwear, cement, steel products, machine tools and electrical equipments and rubber goods. In return East Bengal sent to West Pakistan tea, paper, bananas, betal nuts, pineapples, fish and jute products. The compulsory purchase of West Pakistan products by East Bengal resulted in a further outflow of wealth. East Bengal was forced to pay inflated monopoly prices for West Pakistani goods (Rahman, 1963). From 1950 to 1965 the West Pakistani peasant received 52% of the international market price for his produce. For the same period the East Bengal peasant received only 44%. Industrial wages in East Bengal were on average 25% lower than in West Pakistan; and the Bengali consumers paid between 10% and 15% higher prices than those in West Pakistan. All these forms of extortion and imposition practised by the rulers of Pakistan were intensified in East Bengal in the shape of colonial and class exploitation.

Thus the Bengal peasant's surplus was utilized by the state to finance West Pakistani industry. The long depression of agricultural prices, together with the lack of any viable public credit institutions, forced the

peasants into debt. Lack of surpluses paralysed productivity and usury became more profitable than investment in improved implements. The result was a slow shift towards a survival economy based on food grains and a sluggish growth of the market.

This was the agrarian position on the eve of the liberation. The government, after liberation, characterised the peasant and the land situation in the following way:

> "1. Category A: those who have practically no means of production, who depend entirely on their own labour and work as hired hands;
>
> 2. Category B: those who have small means of production; who depend on their own labour, occasionally employ hired workers when the need arises; and
>
> 3. Category C: those who have appreciable means of production, who work themselves but also employ hired labourers, but do not work as hired labourers themselves. They tend to work as managers of their enterprises rather than as manual workers" (Government of Bangladesh, The First Five Year Plan, 1974, p.157).

Category A refers to the landless peasant, Category B to the middle peasant and Category C to the rich peasant in our terms. As I have already shown, the middle peasants, along with the rich peasants, own the maximum land in the rural areas. In chapter II I discussed how the political structure redefined the state's relationship vis-a-vis the different peasant classes after the liberation.

As there was no room for radical land reform, the poor and the landless peasants did not gain much from the new land legislation. And the 1973 Budget focusses the government's intentions on capital accumulation in agriculture. In the rural situation, the rich peasants and the urban investors in agriculture who marketed the surplus produced, derived the main budgetary benefits. Hence the land legislation was only one of mild reform. The intentions, it seems, were subtle: to help the emerging rich peasants and temporarily to improve the position of some sections of the middle peasantry. In place of a radical reform, the ruling elite was interested in enlarging the rich and middle peasant class to ensure a solid rural power base. In return, the rich and middle peasants supported the ruling elite, voted for them and helped them to prolong the period of political ascendancy.

Again, the ruling elite "nationalised" the abandoned industrial properties left by the Pakistani industrialists during the war and placed a ceiling on private investment in the industrial sector. This policy of nationalisation, along with the ceiling on private investment, scarcity of raw materials, acute foreign exchange shortage and industrial unrest forced the investors to invest a large portion of capital in the agricultural sector. This investment raised the price of land and of agricultural produce. In terms of food grains, the landless, the poor and a section of the middle peasants made up the majority of consumers. They buy food from the market, as the produce they derive from their land is frequently insufficient. This again points to their inadequate control over land.

As the market is controlled by the rich peasants and their urban trading allies, these groups always demand an open market at high prices. The government intervened in the internal marketing of agricultural commodities through a system of internal procurement, imports and distribution by rationing. If we analyse the government's role both in the colonial and the post-colonial periods from the 1950's to the 1970's, we find that the internal procurement was never pursued whole-heartedly and that the exercise was used to support the urban against the rural sector.[1]

From 1960 onwards, it appears that the government gave up procurement except for the border belt where it attempted to curb smuggling to India. The government again took up procurement and attempted to standardise prices in 1973, but without much success (Bangladesh Agricultural Statistics, 1973). It appears that the government was forced to withdraw the policy, as a result of pressure from the rich peasants and their urban allies, or that it was not sufficiently serious in implementing it. Again, the major portion of internally procured and imported food grains was distributed through a system of rationing to selected urban centres at subsidized rates. Through this system the government provided cheap food grains to the urban population. But no such corresponding benefit was extended to the rural population except during crisis situations like famine when some food grains were

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1. See Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Agriculture, Bangladesh Agriculture, in Statistics, Nov., 1973 pp. 125-127 on method, amount and price of procurement.

distributed gratuitiously as a temporary measure. This is a pointer to the fact that the government was more responsive to the needs of the politically powerful groups in the urban areas, since essentially the urban areas benefitted from this system, and the government continued to maintain it on a substantial budgetary liability. If we now compare the price data on food grains in Bangladesh from 1950 to 1970 in non-rationing areas as against rationing areas (rural areas versus selected urban centres), we will see which group in the social structure derived most benefit. At various times, the government used a combination of voluntary and compulsory procurement methods, with or without cordoning off suplus areas and the five mile border belt with India. The procurement prices were always much lower than on the open market. In general the rich peasants refused to give in. In most cases, they preferred to hoard and wait. Table 28 gives a picture of the production of rice and procurement by the government from 1950 to 1970.

Table 29 makes it clear that certain urban populations derived benefit from the system while the rural poor were excluded except in acute distressed situations when some food grains were distributed through rationing. Moreover, in the rural context, all sorts of food items are generally purchased by the rural poor because their food production is not sufficient for year round consumption. This increases their dependence on the market, and makes them especially vulnerable to increases in food prices.

The national bourgeoisie composed of the urban capitalists and the upper range of the civil service and

Table 28 : Production and procurement of rice in Bangladesh (1950/51 - 1969/70)

Year	Production (Rice) (in thousand tons)	Procurement (Rice) (in thousand tons)
1950-51	6,200	65
1951-52	5,900	19
1952-53	6,160	15
1953-54	7,010	26
1954-55	6,420	125
1955-56	5,420	-
1956-57	7,100	-
1957-58	6,490	33
1958-59	5,840	33
1959-60	7,260	197
1960-61	8,350	24
1961-62	8,330	26
1962-63	7,670	10
1963-64	10,200	4
1964-65	9,430	13
1965-66	9,400	93
1966-67	9,200	8
1967-68	10,440	22
1968-69	9,990	9
1969-70	10,550	9

Source: Alamgir and Berlage, Foodgrain (Rice and Wheat) Demand, Import and Price Policy for Bangladesh, The Bangladesh Economic Review, Vol. I, No. 1, January 1973: Table 1.

Table 29 : Price Data on Food Grains in Bangladesh, 1950/51 to 1969/70.

Year	Retail price of medium quality local rice in rural areas	Retail price of rationed rice in urban centres
1950-51	26.99	20.00
1951-52	27.80	20.00
1952-53	30.50	20.47
1953-54	28.61	21.25
1954-55	20.24	21.25
1955-56	27.53	17.10
1956-57	28.61	20.00
1957-58	28.67	21.45
1958-59	30.19	22.50
1959-60	31.91	23.06
1960-61	29.30	23.75
1961-62	30.21	23.75
1962-63	32.22	23.75
1963-64	28.96	23.75
1964-65	29.80	25.40
1965-66	35.95	26.13
1966-67	46.10	28.22
1967-68	42.50	30.17
1968-69	46.23	30.80
1969-70	44.78	30.40

Source: Alamgir and Berlage, Foodgrain Demand, Import and Price Policy for Bangladesh, The Bangladesh Economic Review, Vol. I, No. 1, January 1973, Table 2.

the petit bourgeoisie composed of small traders, artisans and shop-keepers all demand cheap and plentiful supplies of foodgrains. These are man-wage goods. Cheap food provides the capitalists with handsome profits since it keeps the workers and the vast army of the petit bourgeoisie in a relatively satisfied mood. Thus cheap food is linked to politics via economics. The terms on which the marketed surplus is extracted from agriculture is the concern of the urban sector. The government of the day has to accept this factor. On the other hand, in the rural sector all producers who have a net surplus to sell want high prices for foodgrains and fibres and low prices for industrially produced goods, especially fertilizers, pesticides, diesel, etc. Again, certain industrial consumer goods such as cloth, kerosene, salt, etc. are purchased by all rural households. They ask for low prices for these items. Thus, apparently, it seems that there is a common ground for all rural households (rich and poor) against urban ones. But the question is not about the terms of trade. Rather it is about the control over land which shapes the distribution of wealth and poverty and forms the behaviour pattern of surplus peasants. Thus in the rural sector, the urban-rural dimensions of conflict is subordinated to the opposing interests of the rural classes.

Agriculture surplus and the Nature of the State

We will now consider class conflict in the rural areas and the urban-rural dimension of this conflict in the context of agricultural surplus and the nature of the

state. Agricultural surplus takes two forms: real surplus and financial surplus (Byres, 1974). While food and raw materials are the two components of real surplus, the financial surplus represents a "command over resources". Food and raw materials provide the working capital for industries and set as direct earners of foreign exchange. Food, in the ultimate analysis, is the wage-good. The working-class spends a lot on food. If the marketed surplus of food is not sufficient and on favourable terms, it will adversely affect industrialization, as raw materials are essential for agro-based industries. These industries earn foreign exchange, employ labour force and produce consumer goods. On the other hand financial surplus derives from the agricultural sector. Agriculture in an underdeveloped economy dominates and provides a large proportion of the finance for capital formation. This capital is needed for industrialization. In the context of Bangladesh economy agriculture is central, and a large proportion of capital formation for industrialization comes out of agriculture. The rate of investment, large or modest, depends on the financial surplus. We will see why agriculture did not hand over its command over real resources in the specific post-liberation politico-economic context of Bangladesh. In the post-colonial society (Alavi, 1973) of Bangladesh, the bourgeois state structure is over-developed and the state apparatus performs a relatively autonomous economic role, appropriates a significant portion of economic surplus in the form of bureaucratically directed economic activity. The state apparatus is composed of civil and military

bureaucrats and the political party. In the post-colonial context of Bangladesh, the staff of the state apparatus appropriate a very large part of the economic surplus, and tend to control the operations of various social groups. Nationalization gave control over most of industry to the civil servants and the military who became the new industrial overlords, while the ruling political party, basing itself on the new types of property relations created by the liberation, defended its monopoly of economic and political control and extended its hegemony by strong arm measures (Mescarenhas, 1975; The Guardian, August 23, 1975). For these reasons, the agricultural sector, to those who have money and to those who make money, has become a more inviting field for investment. The nationalization of industries, the placement of a ceiling on private investment in the industrial sector, scarcity of raw materials, labour problems, political and bureaucratic interference and extortion, and finally, the exemption from tax in agriculture made the latter more attractive. Thus, instead of agriculture relinquishing its command over resources, it strengthened its grip over them. The formation of capital in agriculture was quickened and polarization in the rural areas sharpened.

In the first place, food and raw materials were held back by the rich peasants and by the investors in agriculture. Secondly, because of their command over resources, the investors shifted a significant portion of capital from the non-agricultural to the agricultural sector and brought about a change in the agrarian structure.

This phenomenon of a structure of command over the basic staple food, rice, is a result of a combination of factors:

1. a pattern of land ownership whereby a considerable surplus of rice output over family needs accrues in the hands of absentee landlords and surplus peasants directly through production;
2. the financial compulsions that force many poor and middle peasants to sell much of the paddy they produce at give-away prices, soon after the harvest or even long before the harvest, to pay off debts and meet immediate cash needs for other purchases. This arrangement is well suited to the rich peasants, the money lenders and the middle men who take advantage of the unfavourable bargaining position of the poor and lower-middle peasants. They thus gain cheap command over further surplus, while the producers are later compelled to buy rice from the retail market at high prices and often subsequently have to go further into debt;
3. the existence of a class of landless labourers who also contribute to food production by their labour, but against wages that reflect supply and demand and bear no relation to the movement of food prices which dance to the speculator's tune. This rural proletariat has no security of work. In times of floods and excessive rains or droughts when work on the land diminishes, they are deprived of work and hence of any command over food, especially at times when food prices

shoot up abnormally.

Thus the rural economy is juxtaposed between a surplus economy dominated by the rich peasants and a survival economy run by the poor and a section of the middle peasants. The survival economy has shifted from cash crops to food grains, whereas the surplus economy has shifted from food grains to cash crops and investment in land (see Tables 5, 22, 23). The spread of rice and the contraction of cash crops is the result of rural disinvestment on the part of the poor and lower-middle peasants. They are increasingly forced to dissolve their capital in order to survive. But the growth of cash crops by the rich peasants and by the investors in the agricultural sector is a pointer to the commercialization of crops and thus a deformed colonial mode of production is working under the pressure of commercialization, directly towards the development of capitalist relations of production. The survival economy is dominated by the surplus economy, the former being integrated into the mechanism of the latter such that it contributes to the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. In the following sections I shall elaborate on the way in which the deformed capitalist economy functions and how prices affect peasant households, change their relative economic positions and hasten the process of polarization. I discuss this with specific reference to the situation of the two villages studied in detail.

5.2 Absentee Investors in Land

After the liberation, a former civil servant and a

businessman from Dacca - let us call them Mr X and Mr Y - purchased land in Mirabo and Nayapara. The civil servant, Mr X, bought fifty bigha of land, of which fifteen is in Mirabo and Nayapara. The transaction was made through Boro Dewan, who, in addition to his other occupations, is a land speculator. Through Tobarak Hossain, the businessman, Mr Y, purchased eighty bigha of land, of which twenty is in Mirabo and Nayapara. Mr X and Mr Y consolidated their land into single plots and invested considerable capital in land. Both use fertilizers, improved seeds and the power pump. Their land is divided into two parts: one for rice cultivation and the other for planting shrubs and tree crops of various sorts (bananas, papaya, guava) and vegetables (chilli, onion, garlic, brinjal, cauliflowers, pumpkin, potatoes, tomatoes, etc.) The rice, tree crops and vegetables are grown for the market.

There is another group of absentee investors. These are government servants, university teachers and merchants. One of them is a former member of the Planning Commission. They have from two to five bigha of land each, purchased through Boro Dewan, the land speculator. All of them bought land from Boro Dewan's "unofficial" holding. The main reason it appears was that land represented a secure investment.[1] These investments in land and the

1. According to Myrdal, they:

> "view land as a secure form of investment, capable of yielding a high return and more importantly, of providing a hedge against inflation. These inducements to land ownership by absentees are, of course, reinforced when the income from land is not taxed..." (1968, p. 1054, Vol. II).

growth of commercial crops raised the price of land in the thana. Table 30 presents a graphic picture of this.

Table 30 : Price of land from 1969 to 1974

Year	Price per Bigha of Land
1969	2,000 taka
1970	2,500 taka
1971	500 - 1,000 taka
1972	3,000 taka
1973	6,500 taka
1974	8,000 taka

Source : 1. Savar Land Registration Office
2. Boro Dewan

During the war year of 1971, the price of land declined because of political uncertainty, the migration of Hindus and the selected exodus of Muslims from the area. Those leaving were forced to sell their land at below the market price. After the liberation, the land market gradually stabilized. The steady pauperization of the peasants and the investment of "black money" (unstated income), transformed the land market. Wealthier urban residents, businessmen and members of the professional classes invested substantially in land. This investment has created influential urban pressures against radical land reform. This has undertones even among the organized political parties. (A. R. Khan, 1972, p. 143, footnote 1). As he is a speculator, Boro Dewan purchased lands and later sold them to urban residents. Tobarak Hossain did the same, taking advantage of his link with the "military stratum". These investors are absentee, but there is a

difference between them and the 'traditional' absentee landlords. Unlike the landlords, they invest in land, produce essentially for the market and use wage labour. As outsiders, with no social ties within the area, they represent a totally different interest system, based on urban finance. Mandel in his analysis of Marx's views on the formation of capital says: "It is the development of the production of exchange values in the towns that makes possible preparation for the predominance of capital. When the power of money becomes predominant in non-industrial societies, it leads to the domination of the country over the town. In other words, the distinctive structure of the Asiatic mode of production - the subordination of the towns both to agriculture and to the central authority - implied that capital could not fully develop " (Mandel, 1971, p. 123; Marx, 1964, p.110). However in the changed context of the post-colonial society of Bangladesh, the state authority is controlled by the specific position of three classes: the rural rich, the urban rich and the bureaucracy (civil and military). These three together acquire and control the economic, social and political power and shape the accumulation of capital. The relation among the three is based on simultaneous collaboration and conflict. The power conflict reflects the rural/urban/bureaucratic interests at one and the same time. These investors in agriculture are not peasants; they operate in the rural areas, collaborate with the rich peasants to maintain high prices for agricultural commodities; but also they collaborate with the National bureaucrats to fix the price

of imported goods from abroad. Both ways the rural poor and the urban poor suffer.

The investors in agriculture have encouraged the spread of the High Yielding Variety of rice. Most of the material inputs (seeds, fertilizer, pesticides) for HYV cultivation have to be purchased from the market, for which credit is needed. The First Five Year Plan of the Government of Bangladesh (p. 137) states that 30-40% of the cost of production needs to be financed from credit. The Cooperatives, the Samabya Bank and the IRDP, (Integrated Rural Development Programme) are the three institutions held responsible for the distribution of institutional credit. During the field work period, the investors in the Mirabo and Nayapara area along with the rich peasants apparently obtained nearly all the institutional loans.

Mirabo and Nayapara belong to the Kasimpur Agricultural Development Estate (see Table 31)

Table 31 : Agricultural loans issued by Kasimpur Agricultural Development Estate, 1965-73

Issue of loan:	Taka 1,132,373
Loan realised:	Taka 620,305
Loan outstanding:	Taka 512,068

Source: First Five Year Plan, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation, Dacca, p.111.

Although I was unable to get direct access to the records, I asked the Assistant Director of the Estate and Boro Dewan, about the characteristics of borrowers. Both answered: "influential persons". I pointed out in previous

chapters how the village cooperatives and the Union Council are dominated by the rich peasants. Mr X and Mr Y are both powerful and have links with the administration. They are therefore able to utilize the credit facilities of the Co-operatives, the Samabya Bank and the IRDP. These investors and the rich peasants "tend to pay less than the social opportunity cost of capital, while small peasants often pay substantially more". (Griffin, 1973, p.20). Loans from institutional sources are less costly than the non-institutional ones (A.R. Khan, 1972). Non-institutional loans also often entail the transfer of the use of land to the creditor. Greater control of the institutions and easier access to credit and capital markets minimize the price of material inputs to the investors and the rich peasants, compared with the price they pay for labour in terms of wages. (Griffin, 1973; I. Khan, 1971). The result is that rich peasants (along with the investors) use more material inputs and less labour, while the small peasant adopts the opposite strategy. Thus the HYV Programme, coupled with institutional loans, in an unchanged or marginally changed power structure in the village has maximized the socio-economic differences among the various classes. Again it gives birth to agrarian tension, because, as Frankel comments for India, "poor peasants, who had appeared resigned to their handicaps under the existing agrarian structure as long as the prospect for material improvement was relatively limited, had become increasingly resentful of institutional arrangements which deprived them of 'their legitimate share' in the greatly increased production now possible

with modern technology." (Frankel, 1971, p.10). The poor peasants and the landless, under the leadership of the Krisak Samity several times gheraoed (organized sit-in) the thana agricultural officer for seeds and for black-marketing of fertilizer. Underground parties from time to time announced "agrarian struggle". Rural tension in this way is rising and sporadic class-struggle reactions occur. On the other hand, outside investment in agriculture has accelerated the tempo of the rural economy towards profitable business activities. Thus rich peasants are "now more likely to be influenced by rough calculations of opportunity costs in determining whether or not to lease out part of their land, or cultivate directly, than by traditional sentiments of personal obligation to customary tenants. Certainly, they do not hesitate to raise rentals in line with appreciating land values and/or to evict even tenants having long-standing cultivating possession of the land." (Ibid, p.147). Nevertheless, the legitimacy of the existing rural situation in Bangladesh is increasingly being called into question. The higher rate of agricultural investment has created considerable uneasiness and has increased social tensions in the agro-economic environment.

5.3 A New Type of Entrepreneur

A new type of entrepreneur is emerging in the rural scene. Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain represent this type. They have initiative and they manipulate others and resources for advancement in their careers.

They are innovators who know how to

locate new resources and to exploit them. Both speculate in land; but whereas Boro Dewan extends his control through political foresight and economic position (buying of land in 1971, for instance); Tobarak Hossain extends his control through force. The peasants are forced to sell or to mortgage land because of bad harvests and inheritance problems due partly to the general increase in population (see Chapter IV). In most cases, Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain are the sources of loans. Through the system of indebtedness, the peasants increasingly become dependent upon the creditors who exploit this form of socio-economic dependency to further their own interests. Similar conditions are found elsewhere (see for example, Mitrany, 1951; Wolf, 1959; 1969; 1971).

The new rural entrepreneurs make effective use of new networks of social relations. Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain are the main agents of expanding commercialization. They have succeeded in establishing a link between the peasants and the urban sector. As they control land, trade and trading infra-structure (this will be elaborated upon later) the peasants are forced to sell their produce to them, and the urban sector supplies the commercial and industrial goods to the rural area through them. This dual link is important. On the other hand, the business-man, the civil servants and the members of the various professional classes of the urban sector are the repositories of power. The rural entrepreneurs therefore, need their assistance, for better seeds, fertilizers and institutional subsidies. Thus in the peasant society of Mirabo-Nayapara the accumulation of economic advantages

and disadvantages leads to a polarizing trend. The rural entrepreneurs are becoming closer to urban interests. The expansion of government activities in rural areas has opened up new channels of power and these men have taken advantage of such channels. Their inroads into the framework of urban finance and the national political parties are cases in point. But do they also need a network of kinship and family ties to retain their hegemony over the village terrain? This will depend upon the circumstances. Long suggests that,

> "The success of the entrepreneur, therefore, lies in his ability to bring together both elements in his network; he must spin a widespread network of weak ties and keep their channels open, and yet at the same time develop a set of close-knit, dependable relationships to assist him in utilizing his resources effectively. The structure of his network will change over time (i.e. some strong ties will become weak and vice versa), and there will be shifts in the emphasis placed on particular types of relationships and their contents. Also, depending on the socio-cultural context, the viability of particular types of relationships, like kinship, will vary considerably; and there will be differences in the ways in which relationships within a common frame are activated and consolidated" (Long, 1975, p.23).

At present, kinship ties constitute the weak ties. This can be illustrated by the following example. In Bangladesh the Union Council is the lowest rung of local government. Mirabo- Nayapara is part of the Yarpur Union, and its

members were last elected during the pre-liberation period. The Council is composed of nine elected members, who in turn select the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman from amongst themselves. In this last election Boro Dewan and Niaz Dewan, who are paternal second cousins, stood from Mirabo-Nayapara ward (constituency) for the post of member. Niaz Dewan, an important member of the Dewan family, is a rich peasant. He married his son into the Bepari family. Abdur Rahim Bepari, the father-in-law of Niaz Dewan's son, is a successful trader. Abdur Rahim Bepari married his daughter into the Talukdar family of Nayapara. Niaz Dewan is therefore related both to the Bepari family of Mirabo and the Talukdar family of Nayapara. In order to secure support he organized his network of affinal ties, and both the families promised him their votes. Boro Dewan, on the other hand, manoeuvred on a different plane. People from both villages have plots on the highland of Mirabo and Nayapara. This land is fertile, yielding three annual crops provided there is irrigation. Boro Dewan promised the facilities of the power pump, while his rival sought to manipulate his kinship network. In the end, however, Niaz Dewan's tactics were counter-productive and Boro Dewan won the election. Thus it would appear that in peasant Bangladesh, kinship is giving way to external, independent relationships.[1] In kinship, two aspects are

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1. Godelier throws light on this process:

> "With capitalism, the internal correspondence between the economy and kinship seems to give way more and more to an external, independent relationship, although in fact the new functions of the family stand in a relationship of internal correspondence with the new conditions of production" (Godelier, 1972, p.97).

combined: genealogy and inheritance. So far as inheritance is concerned, kinship is part of the relations of production and reproduction; and in the end if effects genealogy. Inheritance produces property relations which, as others have argued, operate between people, not between a person and a thing (Gluckman, 1965; Goody, 1962). Again, inheritance is individual, not corporate (as I have described earlier), but at the same time a basic for potential inequality. In the course of time one sub-unit of the family becomes rich and dominant by acquiring properties. Thus in an economy of scarcity, property relations become dominant and in the end, with an increasing capitalist mode of production, social ties emanating from genealogical bonds tend to disintegrate. If people are confronted with choice, as the example shows, in most cases they opt for property relations or for economic considerations, and not for kinship per se.

As rural entrepreneurs, Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain also spread their social networks out from their class-based positions.[1] From the standpoint of social class, Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain belong to the category "rich peasant", but from the standpoint of class position,[1] one is the Chairman of the Union Council and a land speculator, while the second is a former liberation army man, a member of the Awami League, poised between underground left elements and militant peasants, on the one hand, and the government and vested interests on the other.

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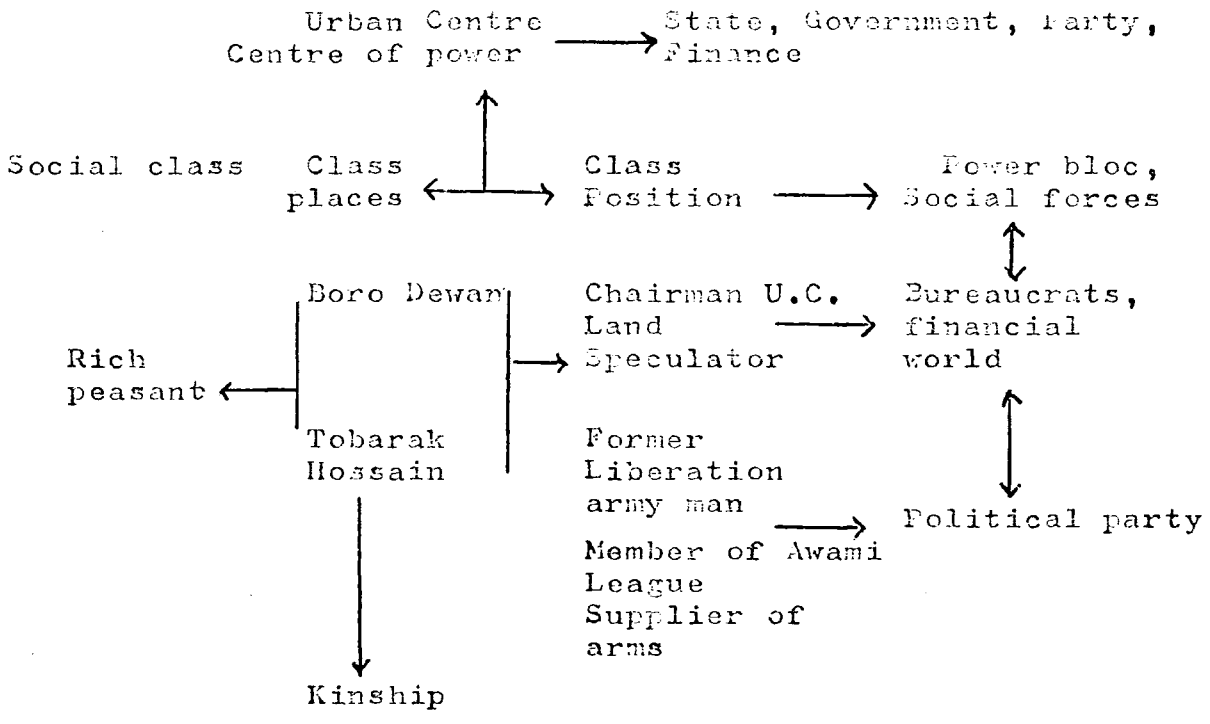
1. On class and class position see Poulantzas, 1975b, pp. 57-93.

Both Tobarak Hossain and Boro Dewan extend their social network based on these class positions. Boro Dewan, as Chairman of the Union Council and as land speculator, is well known to officials and to various people from different walks of life. Tobaral Hossain is linked with the ruling political party and with the "military stratum". Both of them use their various links with the bureaucracy, the financial world, the political parties and the "military stratum" to consolidate their positions within the socio-economic and political structure. In Chapter VII I will describe in detail their modes of operation.

Class relations are materialized and concentrated (Poulantzas, 1975b), in class position. The latter involves two aspects: (a) places occupied by the agents, and (b) reproduction and distribution of agents to various places. The first masks the placement of classes in the network of production, political and ideological domination and subordination. The second masks the incumbant, his placement in the network of domination and subordination. Both Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain are from the rich peasant class and their particular placement in this class is the principal aspect of their behaviour pattern; and they accordingly develop their networks on this basis. Thus both class place and class position determine their economic relations and the spread of their socio-political relations. In this network the role of kinship is minimal. Figure 6 illustrates the pattern of socio-political relations.

Figure 6 : Socio-political Relations : The Cases of Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain



5.3.1 Market Mechanism

In previous sections, I described the configuration of existing social forces. Land reform has strengthened the rich peasants in the rural sector. The government's programme of nationalization of industries and the ceiling on private investment in the industrial sector forced the investors to invest a part of their capital in agriculture; and in national politics the agricultural bloc emerged as a significant power. In this way land reform, nationalization, the ceiling on private investment, and the agricultural power bloc have structured class alliance and class conflict. Money wages are linked to the prices of food and money profits are dependent upon the prices of agricultural commodities. During the period of fieldwork, production in the industrial sector went

down due to shortage of raw materials and labour problems (see Table 32).

Table 32 : Industrial output of calendar year 1972 compared with 1969/70

Product	% Change in output
Jute manufactures	-30
Cotton yarn	-48
Cotton weaving (Handloom and mill)	-38
Paper and newsprint	-53
Cement	-53
Fertilizer	-15
Cigarettes	-46
Petroleum	-15
Sugar	-74

Source : Austin Robinson, 1973, p.13, Economic Aspects of Bangladesh, Table 4, Overseas Development Institute Ltd., London

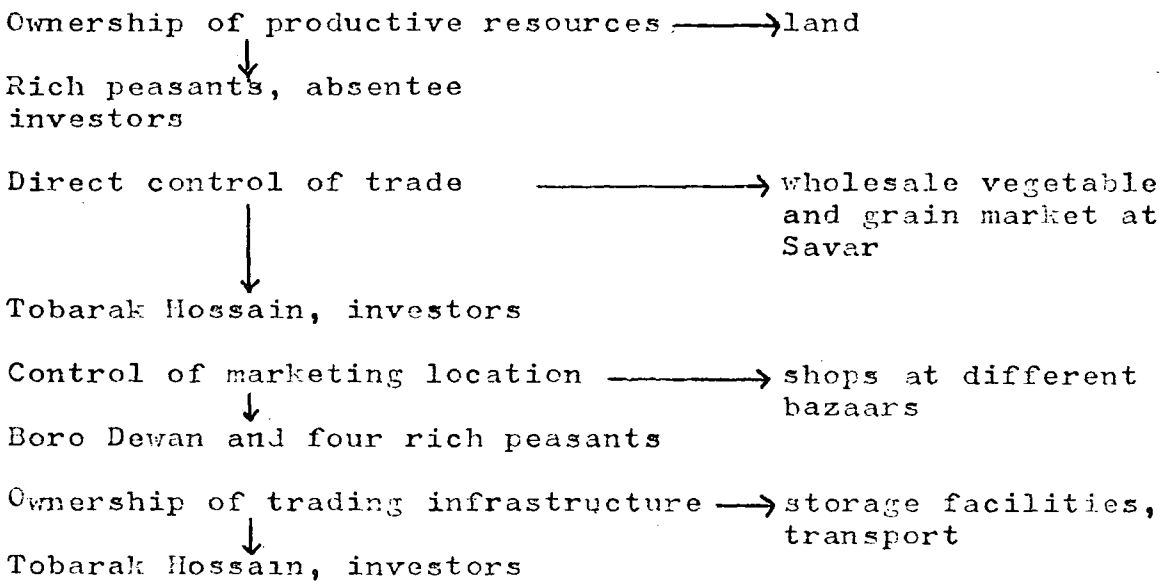
The above data, though based on 1972, had relevance for 1974

To investors the prospects in the agricultural sector and in the importing of consumer goods looked better. A few people, including some close to the government, prospered. The country's consumer boom was financed not by domestic production but by foreign money and aid. A section of the middle class (i.e. political party functionaries, civil servants, etc.) concentrated their energy in a vortex of instant consumption and refused to turn prosperity to national advancement (The Guardian, October 16, 1975). Thus agricultural produce provided the rich peasants and the investors with handsome profit margins and the price of agricultural products (especially rice) shot up. The

rich peasants along with the investors emerged as the dominant political and economic group in the agricultural sector. They ushered in capitalistic development in general and the rationalization of the land market in particular.

In the context of Mirabo-Nayapara, Boro Dewan, Tobarak Hossain and absentee investors now control both productive resources and distributive facilities. The latter are controlled in three ways: direct control of trade, control of marketing locations and ownership of trade infrastructure (i.e. storage facilities and the like). Figure 7 represents the situation schematically:

Figure 7 : Ownership and control



In these marketing arrangements all economic networks converge on dominant centres, in this case Dacca and Savar. The dependent centres are rural retail markets (e.g. Asulia, Yarpur and Kasimpur) which receive the goods for sale. This market economy is controlled predominantly by outside interests. The urban

primary centre is controlled by entrepreneurs outside the local marketing system while the rural wholesale market is controlled jointly by urban and rural entrepreneurs. This arrangement is basically imposed from outside and hierarchical in nature. Hence peasants are likely to see sharp differences in it between themselves and the entrepreneurs. Here economic position rests on dual control: control of production resources and control of facilities. This gives the dominant group and their retainers exclusive power to control the economy.

5.4.2 Alienation of Land

Austin Robinson writes about Bangladesh in 1973: "It is that of an economy in which individuals are raring to go, but there is a shortage of almost everything, so that getting going is peculiarly difficult. Shop shortages are, for the moment at least, increasing rather than diminishing. Shortages of goods that were formerly imported either from abroad or West Pakistan are becoming greater as stocks are exhausted. Simple convenience of life and near necessities, such as cigarettes and pharmaceuticals, have been increasingly difficult to obtain. Imported goods are unobtainable except by the most fortunate " (Robinson, 1973, p.11). The other side of the picture is the existing structure of inequality in agriculture. Land reform consolidated the rural power base and strengthened its bargaining position. It has its repercussions on agriculture's marketed surplus. An analysis of the effects of land reform on the aggregate surplus makes it clear that the surplus per unit of gross

output is dependent on agricultural production technology and land reform itself shapes the character of the marketed surplus. (Sanghvi, 1969). I discussed previously the structural inequality in agriculture and land reform and the marketed surplus. The new inputs buttress the structural inequality and a comparatively small fraction of the extra-agricultural output generated percolates through to the rural poor. They, again, consume food relatively intensively, while some of the remainder is consumed by the rich and the upper group of the middle peasants, the greater proportion is for the market. And, "therefore, the marketed surplus is likely to be highly responsive to changes in output. It follows immediately that the form of technical change may have profound political consequences in that it will increase the economic dependence of productive units in agriculture on national bourgeois interests and designs. A further effect is that the growth of intersectoral transactions for the purposes of agricultural production as well as rural households' consumption will further promote capitalist development in agriculture and hence in the economy as a whole" (Bell, 1974, p.206).

Thus the economy of scarcity and structural inequality in agriculture combined to raise the price of both agricultural and other commodities. In the previous section I explained how the rich peasants and the investors in Mirabo-Nayapara area jointly control the productive resources and marketing facilities. The price index of different commodities at the Savar bazaar during 1974 is given in Table 33.

Table 33 : Price index of different commodities at Savar bazaar, 1974

Commodity	Quantity	Price	
		January	April
Paddy	per maund	115-120 taka	130-140 taka
Dried chilli	per seer	25-30 taka	50-60 taka
Lungi: superior quality	1	30-35 taka	50-60 taka
Lungi: inferior quality	1	20-25 taka	40-45 taka
Saree: superior quality	1	80-90 taka	90-100 taka
Saree: inferior quality	1	40- taka	70-80 taka
Kerosene	per seer	3 taka	5 taka
Salt	per seer	3 taka	10 taka

Source: (a) Boro Dewan
(b) Shop keepers, Savar bazaar
(c) Agricultural officer, Savar

The table illustrates the enormous increases in prices of different commodities between January and April, 1974. Due to this rise in prices, the rich peasants and the upper group of middle peasants ceased their normal practice of renting out their land. In Mirabo-Nayapara the maximum amount of land is held by the rich and the middle peasants. The poor and the lower end of the middle peasants and the landless must generally rent land; and, those who mortgage land work on that same land as share-croppers. The latter system makes it situationally possible for a large section of the rural community to get access to the means of production for subsistence. This access to land makes use of a labour-power reflected through the subsistence economy which may minimize the trend towards polarization.

But the upswing of prices has modified this, since the withdrawal of land rented out by the rich and the upper middle peasants has driven a large section of the poorer peasants out of the subsistence economy. The peasants or the share-cropper tenants fail to meet subsistence needs in the commodity sector. They become alienated from the means of production (in this case, access to additional land) and from also the subsistence economy. This alienation and failure to satisfy subsistence needs has in fact sharpened the polarization process in Mirabo-Nayapara. The rich peasants and the upper group of middle peasants use wage-labour for the cultivation of land. Some families, notably Boro Dewan, have adopted mechanization (tractor, power pump, etc.). Although the aggregate demand for labour has risen, the wages received are insufficient to buy rice on the open market. (Whereas the daily wage rate is five to six taka, rice costs seven taka per seer. Previously agricultural labourers had received a free midday and evening meal in addition to their wages. There was now only a wage, with no free meals). The two trends of extensive use of labour and labour-displacing mechanization are operating simultaneously. The interactions of the two trends are complex and together they shape future processes and some tensions. They hasten a process of differentiation in the rural areas and further the existing structure of inequality. The rich peasants and their allies are becoming more powerful both in ecpnomic and political terms while the poor peasants remain poor but increase numerically. The rich peasants and their allies use more hired labour, only infrequently

drawing upon kin-based labour. This rich labour lives on the land and thrives. (Dumont, 1973).

5.5 Floods and Famine, 1974

As Shanin puts it, "The peasant household functions as a small production-unit of extremely limited resources, greatly subject to the powerful forces of nature, the market and the state" (Shanin, 1972, p.112). In this section I will elaborate on the impact of external factors, such as floods and famine, on the peasant household and on how these accelerate the polarization process.

5.5.1 Flood

The southern portion of Mirabo-Nayapara is a low-lying area. During the floods of 1974, this area and the adjacent villages of Yarpur, Neamatpur and many others were submerged. During this time, I visited the entire area with a survey team. I will quote from a daily diary I kept to give some idea of the human situation and its consequences on the agrarian structure.

Diary: 14th September - 20th September, 1974

14th September

Survey teams carry chira, gur and medicines. We visit the relief camp at the High School in Mirabo; three rooms, twenty families, about one hundred people half-starved; relief inadequate, ten taka per family once and one seer Ata per head once; poor peasants and landless families; cases of dysentry and flu; the people say: "We haven't seen such floods

in our lives."

Many houses are half submerged and in ruins; Yarpur village: most families have been starving for four to five days; men left several days back for Savar, Tongi and Dacca in search of food and work. They have not yet returned, leaving the women and children without food and security.

The weather has been near-cyclonic all day. Some tense moments on the high waters over the paddy fields.

15th September

Yarpur village. Women are asked to form a queue according to each para. We explain that we have a few sarees and a small quantity of food. We want to given them to the most needy. Some women show their sarees: holes of varying sizes. We ask if there are women who cannot come because of their sarees or because of starvation weakness. After a very lively discussion, we get the answer: two women are nearly nude and are unable to come out; three others are too weak to move. These women should be given sarees and food first, followed by the others.

More starvation cases. Chira and gur are distributed according to needs.

16th September

Neamatpur village. Hiring a country boat is expensive, costing 60 taka for an all-day trip. We distribute one seer of Ata for each adult and child and one seer of chira with gur for each infant or sick member of families in the relief camp.

The weather is slightly better. One team member dived into the waters over the paddy fields to measure the depth: seven to ten feet.

17th September

Mirabo High School; official relief camp. We examined the "priority list". The list recorded nearly all families claiming relief in the ward (constituency of a member of the Union Council). No order of priority was given. The listed families received once every five days relief of a half to one seer Ata or five to ten taka per family, irrespective of family size.

We ask which family is in the most distressed condition. They are a family comprising parents and a grown-up daughter. We meet the parents and want to see the daughter. We are told she is naked and is unable to come out. They have been starving for the last five days. The head of the family is a poor peasant. We offer them the alternative: ten taka in cash or a saree. The parents are unable to decide. The mother asks for the saree, the father for the cash. In the end we give them ten taka cash and a saree. The parents burst into tears. We know that the situation will be the same in three to four days. The hungry father will seize his daughter's new saree and sell it to stay alive.

A member of the Union Council pressed us to visit his para . He is the richest in the area. He showed us two families in his para who he claimed were

starving. We suggested that he and others well-off should take care of these two families. The member kept pleading that we give something for his para and apparently this is for his political prestige. He invited us to lunch while the two families are starving. We refused lunch. Later we learned that these two families are his kin.

18th September

We visited another camp at the extreme south-east of Mirabo. The camp is under the personal supervision of the Chairman of the Union Council. Some ten families are there. They get relief channelled through the Chairman. We found that these families are his share-croppers.

Nayapara. A school teacher is starving with his family. He refuses to seek relief because of his status. We visit his house. He is lying on his bed with a pillow pressed against his stomach to relieve the pain from starvation. We give them some Ata.

19th September

We visited the Yarpur camp. The Secretary of the Krisak Samity is there with some members. They are shouting. We ask why. "Members are not distributing relief goods properly. The list they prepared is faulty."

20th September

Testimony of a middle peasant. We ask him to give his assessment of the problems after the floods recede. Here are his observations:

Doubtful if there will be enough time for transplanted

Aman. It will take more than a month for the waters to recede.

Seeds are coming. Concern for seed-bed preparation is visible. Poor peasants may not be able to afford seeds and other inputs. Rich peasants will perhaps cultivate poor peasants' land on a share-cropping basis. A reverse prpcess.

Rich peasants will not hire out their implements to poor peasants. They take advantage of the situation. Look at cow fodder. Tilling cows are starving, too weak to pull and are susceptible to disease.

In normal circumstances, poor peasants and share-croppers sell their produce immediately after harvest to repay loans and to buy urgent necessities. They would receive a twenty percent higher price if they were to wait a month before selling. But they cannot afford to hold on. The forward purchase system is prevalent. Poor peasants and share-croppers sell the anticipated harvest at give-away prices to meet pressing needs. They often have little left after the harvest and must go into debt again to buy food and other necessities for the family. These they have to buy at higher prices. This time it will be higher still.

The daily wage is six taka a day, but work is scarcely available. The floods will lower the wage rate.

Money lending will now start. Land will be transferred from the poor to the rich. Some will be purchased by

outside business interests. They do not want small plots, but buy large plots through agents in the area.

5.5.2 Famine 1974

After the floods, famine started. The government ordered the opening of one langer khana (gruel kitchen) in each union. Since the Union Council for Yarpur Union is located in Mirabo, a gruel kitchen was opened there. People from all around the union (including Mirabo-Nayapara) started coming to the langer khana. Here inadequate quantities of edibles or semi-edibles were distributed to three to four hundred people daily. The starving came from four, five and six miles around and would wait all day to finally receive one chapati per head. The weight of the chapati varied according to the daily supply of Ata. These are not residential kitchens, and the journey to and from the langer khana may consume more calories than the daily ration supplies. Incidents of maldistribution and of selling government-supplied wheat on the black market are reported. The Krisak Samity from time to time protested. Once, a leader of the Samity was severely beaten by roughnecks. The rumour is the man behind the scenes was the government appointed dealer in the grain shop. The dealer wanted to still the protest and to disorganize the samity. This incident will be discussed in detail in Chapter VI.

The poor peasants of Mirabo-Nayapara (both males and females) come to the langer khana for food. The bottom group of the middle families send their womenfolk to collect the chapatis. Three upper middle families (one from Mirabo and two from Nayapara) send their children

to the langer khana.

As the food distributed by the langer khana is scanty, the able-bodied male members of the poor and landless peasant families temporarily left the village for Dacca. They hoped to obtain grain from the city ration shop and to find employment. They would then be able to send food and money back home. The following table gives the prices of food in the Dacca ration shops and on the open market.

Table 34 : Prices of Food, November 1974

Commodity	Quantity	Price Dacca: Ration shop	Savar: Open Market
Rice	Per maund	60 taka	350 taka
Mustard Oil	Per seer	5 taka	50 taka
Sugar	Per seer	6 taka	Not available
Gur	Per maund	-	350 taka

The open market price is beyond the reach of the average peasant household. At the beginning of the year, rich peasants begin to hoard grain. The price then shows an upward trend through the year. They control the rural marketing structure along with urban business interests. They speculate, hoard, smuggle and engage in black market activities, taking advantage of each situation, whether it be the market, floods or famine. They act as profit maximisers. The combination of food scarcity and a polarized structure of command over food output exacerbates the situation. The rich peasants are the least affected by natural disaster as the testimony of flood and famine shows. The most affected are the landless, the poor

peasants and a section of the middle peasants.

5.6 Polarization

> "The massive economic vicissitudes of peasant households resulting from the impact of these (nature, market, state) external factors were expressed in two ways: (1) aggregate shifts, or changes in the prosperity of the peasantry en masse; (2) changes in the relative positions of peasant households" (Shanin, 1972, p.114).

We have seen how the upswing in prices of agricultural commodities affected the tenurial relations in Mirabo-Nayapara. Nearly all families including the landless, the poor peasant and a group of the middle peasants rent some land from the rich and upper middle peasants, but this entire agreement depends on the state of the market economy. As long as the price of agricultural commodities is low, the share-cropping system is profitable for the rich and the upper middle peasants. But in 1974-5, the situation changed due to the increase in prices of agricultural commodities. The rich peasants and their allies thus reduced the amount of land available for share-cropping. This change has adversely affected the peasant share-croppers: by being deprived of additional lands, these people are now deprived of essential crops. The share-cropping system acts more or less to conceal unemployment, but under the new arrangement the poorer peasants are unemployed for most of the time. Also, limited mechanization has partly displaced them and restricted their usefulness as wage labourers. Again,

whereas wages are high in comparison with former years, they are insufficient to buy food in the open market. In 1970, the daily rate was Taka 2; in 1971, it varied between Taka 1 and Taka 1.8 annas; in 1972, it rose to Taka 2 to 3; in 1973, it became Taka 4 and in 1974 it rose to between Taka 5 and 6. The fall in the wage rate in 1971 was fundamentally due to the war. But in 1974-75 food prices increased, the cost of rice per seer being increased to Taka 7.[1] Surplus rice came onto the market from the rich peasant class, who, as I have shown in a previous section, manipulate and control this market.

During the fieldwork period, then, ninety-four households in Mirabo-Nayapara were alienated from access to additional land. Of these, sixteen were landless, twenty six were poor peasants and fifty two were middle peasants, of whom the latter owned ten bigha each.

Earlier, when discussing agricultural labour, I showed that while the landless and the poor peasants work as labourers throughout the year, the lower middle peasants subscribe to agricultural labour on a short-term basis only, during the harvesting seasons. As they are now alienated from access to additional land, they have become totally dependent on their small parcels of land and they are unable to exploit their excess labour power. The impact on the landless and the poor peasant households is different. As they are habituated to labouring throughout the year, this alienation has made them more mobile.

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1. Data were collected from the area I surveyed. A family consisting husband and wife and two grown up children consumes daily two and a half seers of rice. Daily they take three meals, morning, midday and evening. Rice constitutes the main food item.

Members of these households now leave the village for longer periods in search of jobs in Savar, Manikgonj and Dacca as rickshaw pullers or casual labourers. On the other hand, the under-employed lower-middle peasants have become politically active and agitate on rates for wage labour, on hoarding, black marketing of food and fertilizer, etc. Thus the pressure of the market economy has changed the village tenurial system, revealed the "concealed" unemployment and made labour more mobile and politically active.

The impact of floods and famine on the village economy is various. We have seen that these disasters least affect the rich peasants. Rather they take advantage of them and make maximum profit out of them. The pressure of the market economy tended to alienate the landless, the poor and the lower middle households from access to additional land. The floods and the famine, however, worsened their position, forced them to sell or mortgage their lands and thus increasingly pauperized them.

Savings and investment decisions in the rural economy depend on several factors. It is true that the decision to save or to invest is a matter of individual household choice regarding the disposal of current income. But this decision is largely dominated by social forces. The capital formation of a household depends on the surplus generated in the current account and on the degree of access to external resources (i.e. credit, transfers, etc.). The level of surplus depends on the level of current income; and, this income, in turn, is a function of the control over productive assets. Ownership of land,

tenurial arrangements, access to technology, access to inputs (including funds for the purchase of farming inputs and for financing expenditure) in the rural sector are determined by the interaction of social, cultural, economic and political forces in a concrete historical setting. These multiple factors influence the nature of economic transactions and activities, savings and investments (Brie, 1964).

In the context of rural areas, landholding has significant influence on the savings of the household (Kelly and Williamson, 1968). A number of studies in India have made the same point.[1] Here I will comment upon savings and investment decisions in the context of landholding and capital formation in Bangladesh. In all previous studies (Alamgir, 1975a, 1975b), landholding is shown to be an important factor causing variations in savings behaviour in rural households. The studies also suggest that the higher average rate of savings by the large landholders is a reflection of the availability of profitable farm investment opportunities, coupled with additional non-farm income. Again, other factors such as access to material inputs and funds for investment are also related to the tenurial arrangement. In many cases,

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1. Sisodia, 1969; Desai, 1969; Misra and Mallick, 1969; Ghosh, 1969.

(see the discussion in Chapter II) the poor peasants and the landless labourers are debarred from joining the cooperatives. All such factors compel the poor peasants, tenants and a section of the middle peasants to fall back upon the unorganized rural capital market for funds at very high interest rates. This implies mortgaging present and future savings.

In the context of Mirabo-Nayapara we see that the floods have wrecked the peasant economy. Because of the desperate condition in which he is placed, the peasant is prepared to agree to any rate of interest when in need of food. Take the case of Jahan Ali Bepari who borrowed one maund of rice from Boro Dewan during the floods. At harvest time, according to the agreement, he was to pay Boro Dewan two maunds of paddy in return; but due to the famine he was unable to settle the debt and agreed to pay three maunds at the next harvest. Still unable to pay, again because of the famine, he was forced to convert the loan into a mortgage on his land. Eventually, he had to give up one bigha of land. Another example is that of Torab Ali Talukdar. He is a middle peasant from Nayapara, owner of twenty five bigha of land. The floods destroyed his crops. His only son is a student at Dacca University; and, the father bears his son's educational expenses. The combined factors of a bad harvest and educational commitments led him to mortgage five bigha of land to the head of the Sarkar family. Another poor peasant from Mirabo is Nasu Mulla. During the floods, his pair of bullocks died. He borrowed money from Tobarak Hossain to buy new bullocks on the condition

that he would repay twice the sum in cash or grain at the next harvest, when the price of grain is generally depressed. He borrowed Taka 250 and was indebted to repay Taka 500 or seven to eight maunds of paddy, because of the relative down-wind swing of the grain market at this time. In this way the peasants lose doubly: in lands and in crops. But how do they survive? They survive by going hungry, by going into debt and by selling or mortgaging land. It is a circular process of destitution. During 1974-75, three poor peasant households had to sell all their land and leave the village permanently because of the famine. A total of twenty poor peasant households in Mirabo who sold or mortgaged land (some 50 bigha in total). In Nayapara, five middle peasant families sold some portion of their land, usually two to three bigha; three other middle peasant families mortgaged between one and four bigha of land each. In Mirabo, the picture was similar: forty seven middle peasant families there sold two to four bigha of their land each and ten families mortgaged four to five bigha each. (For details see Table 35.)

Who bought these lands or took up the mortgages? Boro Dewan, Tobarak Hossain, Peer Sarkar, and other rich peasant families. Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain resold these holdings at an inflated rate to urban business interests and to individual buyers. To the latter, amassing landholdings is a means of security in times of inflation; to the former, it is commerce. Boro Dewan and Peer Sarkar disposed of fifteen and ten bigha respectively from their "unofficial" holdings, at a profit,

to urban business interests during this time.

These events show that, on one plane, a class of peasants is being increasingly alienated from the land and on another, lands are becoming concentrated in the hands of a different class of peasants, who are developing into speculators. Powerful external factors contribute to socio-economic differentiation and to the related process of polarization. We find thus, that there is a growing coalition of interests between the rich and the urban investors. We also find that the frequency of natural disasters destabilizes the middle peasants, making them yet poorer and more mobile. In the concrete situation, then, the peasantry is more sharply divided into classes, with tensions and conflicts created by socio-economic polarization within the rural sector.

Table 35 : Number of households leaving the village, selling or mortgaging land in the reference period

Village	Type of household	Number of households	Left Village Permanently	Sold Land	Mortgaged/ Sold Land	Mortgaged land
Mirabo	Poor	22	2		20 (50 bigha)	
	Middle	57		47 (2-4 bigha each)		10 (4-5 bigha each)
Nayapara	Poor	3	3			
	Middle	8		5 (2-3 bigha each)		3 (3 bigha each)

In this chapter I have tried to treat the various problems arising out of such a polarization process.

Polarization has entailed the disintegration of the household economy for the poor and a section of the middle peasants and led to the stabilization of the position of the rich peasants. This stable economic base adds a new dimension to the class formation and the rich peasants emerge as a major force on socio-economic-political terrain. Previously, in colonial times, the scarce and static resources, less productivity and the system of multiple inheritance progressively eroded the affluence of particular families. This affected capital formation in a big way. But in the changed context we find a great deal of fluidity regarding the poor and a section of middle peasants but striking stability in the rich peasant category. The rich peasants now increase productivity investments, in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, and enter into new alliances to develop a secure environment for their productive investments. Their operational area is not confined within the village. They impose class domination in the rural areas and extend class alliances into the towns and administration. Thus a stable, rich peasant class within a national economic and political frame confronts the middle and poor peasants. It represents a shift in the structure of power. This shift is the result of a change in the mode of production in which vertical relationships of interdependence are yielding to polarization and structural antagonism. In the next chapter I will explore the resulting struggles that are taking place.

Chapter VI : Confrontation

The object of this chapter is to identify the structural position of the different peasant classes, and to show how this shapes political confrontation. On one plane, confrontation is the outcome of the constraints imposed by the agrarian structure and by the level of the national economy but, on another, is the result of the specific political actions undertaken by underprivileged peasants, spearheaded by left-wing political groups. Here then, is a situation where a 'class in itself' is gradually transformed into a 'class for itself'.

6.1 Strategies and Changes in Land Reform

Land reform in both pre-liberation and post-liberation Bangladesh reinforced economic stratification, leading to a polarization of classes. The object of this section is to focus on the strategies adopted in land reform and to describe the changes that occurred. These changes resulted from a conflict between the constraints of the existing agrarian structure and national economic objectives; and from the inconsistency which existed between the ideology of land reform and the actual programme that was implemented. Underlying these inconsistencies was the political interests of the ruling elite. Their main aim was to destroy the dominant position of the established landed classes and to improve the position of the rich and middle peasants. The slogan "Land to the tiller" suited their strategy and helped to organise the peasants under one banner. After evicting the "feudal" class from the power structure, they attempted

to strike a balance between popular and class-based support. This was effected at the expense of the Zamindar class and resulted in the improvement in the position of the rich and middle peasants. The ruling elite was prepared to compromise with the rich and middle peasants, who were against a radical reform in land distribution which would benefit the rural poor (Joshi, 1974).

In pre-partition days in Bangladesh, land was concentrated in the hands of a minority of landlords. The real tillers of the land, the mass of peasants, had limited proprietary rights (Thorner, 1956; United States Department of Agriculture, 1965). After partition, there were three problems facing the ruling elite: 1. the removal of the discrepancy between proprietorship and the de facto ownership of land; 2. the chronic stagnation of agriculture, and 3. the need to accelerate industrial development. There were apparently two alternatives - to emulate Communist China and Japan under American occupation after the Second World War, or to follow the English enclosures of the eighteenth century or Prussian Junkerism of the nineteenth century. Following the first course meant the redistribution of land among small peasants and landless labourers and the transformation of actual tillers into owner-cultivators. The second policy entailed inducing the landlords to undertake cultivation by hired labour instead of leasing out lands to tenants. In Bangladesh after partition, the ruling elite followed neither path and adopted a middle-road policy.

This policy curtailed landlordism, upgraded the upper strata of the peasants and gave relief to other tenants (Joshi, 1967). This middle-road policy reflected the character of the power-elite (Tai, 1968). There was, as suggested by Tai, a close correspondence between the elite and the landed classes, and a deep polarization between the landed and the landless classes. In fact, however, in East Pakistan, there also existed an intermediate class of tenants poised between the landlords and the poor tenants and the labourers. This intermediate class was exploited by the old land system but at the same time was relatively better-off than the poor tenants and others.

In the specific case of East Pakistan, land reform was rapidly introduced in the 1950's. As I suggested earlier,

> "It was possible to obtain land reform so quickly in East Bengal after partition, as it provided the opportunity for the Muslim majority to free itself from the economic control of the Hindu minority" (Bredo, 1961, p.263).

Political consciousness of the peasants was an added factor (Myrdal, 1968, Vol. 1). Implementation of land reform was assigned to the normal administrative agencies of the government. The peasants were not associated with the process of reform implementation as was the case in Japan and Taiwan (Ladejinsky, 1964). Nor were the administrative agencies bound by a time-limit. The under-tone of this approach was that the government behaved leniently with landlords over violation of land laws,

gradually forgetting about the implementation of the laws, yet acted ruthlessly against the peasants whenever they stood up for their rights. The suppression of the Nachol and Hajong peasant movements during the pre-liberation period and of the Atrai peasant movement during the post-liberation period are cases in point.[1]

Partition and subsequent land reform changed the rural structure. After the mass exodus of Hindu landlords and money lenders to India, a peasant economy dominated by rich and middle peasants emerged in East Bengal producing jute as the main cash crop for the market. But almost immediately, state policy reversed the situation, making East Bengal agriculture subservient to industries, mainly situated in West Pakistan, and diverting agricultural surplus to provide raw materials for industry and to feed the growing urban population. All this happened within the formal state structure through a pattern of internal colonial exploitation:

> "The prices the peasant received for his products, whether sold abroad or in the home market, were driven well below their opportunity cost to the economy. This fact had a secondary benefit for the industrialist; since food was the major wage good, capital had a proportionately lower price to pay for the subsistence of its workers. Even when market fluctuations threatened to bring agricultural prices

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1. On the political mobilization of the Bengal peasantry, see: Dhanagare, 1973; Umar, 1974, 1975; Overstreet and Windmiller, 1959; Chattopadhya, 1970; Sen, 1972; Chaudhury, 1972).

> up, the State intervened directly to insulate capitalists from the ramifying effect of such price movements on wages. Compulsory procurement of agricultural products in the country and their sale beneath market prices in the city passed a further subsidy from the peasant surplus to urban incomes. Where government procurement was awkward, there was always a plethora of PL480 food commodities from the USA to flood the market and bring rising agricultural prices down again. These three mechanisms: adverse terms of trade, forced procurement and pressure from Nebraskan handouts, were orchestrated by the Centre to hold agricultural prices to a bare minimum"
>
> (Nations, 1971, p.8).

As a result, the peasants' margin of surplus was cut back to finance West Pakistani industry. This made East Pakistan a colony within the state structure. The extraction of agricultural surplus crippled productivity. The long depression of agricultural prices and the lack of viable public credit institutions forced many of the peasants into a subsistence-based, survival economy. They were in continuous debt. However, low prices, government agricultural and trade policies and chronic indebtedness undermined the relatively egalitarian peasant society and affected some groups more than others. Land, cattle and implements began to accumulate in the hands of the richer peasants. Because of the pressure of a colonial economy and class structure, the poor and the middle peasants were forced to liquidate their capital: land. On the other hand, the rich peasants prospered; and West Pakistan

grew economically at the expense of East Pakistan. This double setting of class and colonial exploitation determined the growth of capitalism in Pakistan (Rahman, 1963; Report of Panel of Economists, 1971; Bose, 1968).

In this way, Pakistan embarked upon industrialization and mobilised the surplus from agriculture. The government's strategy was to raise agriculture's marketed surplus and its taxable capacity. All this took place within the complex structures of both class and colonial exploitation but under the umbrella of a single nation state. During the 1950's, the introduction of land reform gave East Pakistani peasants some relief, but the central government's agricultural and industrial policies deepened the rural stratification and increased polarisation. Such policies forced the small peasant to liquidate more and more of his capital, which began to be concentrated in the hands of the rich peasant. Productivity dwindled as a result. So, during the 1960's, the government introduced a technology-biased approach to agricultural development. The new strategy emphasised the profitability of large-scale farming enterprises and provided credit, fertilizers, improved seeds, power pumps and machinery. Infra-structural facilities were placed in the hands of the rich peasants, who were wealthy enough to buy these new inputs. Hence, colonial agricultural and industrial policies strenthened the rich peasants. The burdens of development fell mostly

on the rich peasants: they marketed their surplus, were the major consumers of industrial goods and paid the developmental taxes. The rural works programme, in fact, attempted to improve the terms of trade for agriculture, and thus counteract the developmental squeeze (Abdullah, 1973b; Islam, 1972).

In 1960, the total industrial employment was as follows: East Pakistan, 30.9 percent; West Pakistan (including Karachi) 69.1 percent (Lewis, 1970). Within East Pakistan,

> "Bengali Muslims control less than 2.9 percent of private industrial assets; the rest is owned by West Pakistanis or local Hindus. Because of 'foreign control', little of the wealth created in East Bengali industry remains in the province: most of it finds its way back to West Pakistan in the form of salaries, dividends, interest, and profits remitted home. Thus much of the most valuable source of capital accumulation in East Bengal is lost and with it the secondary multiplier effects of the initial investment. The financial and social links which tie East Bengal industry to the West have made eastern enterprises mere enclave extensions of the metropolitan economy of Karachi and the Punjab. Thus

> the East Bengal relation to the West is characterised by the classical contradictions of colonial 'development where islands of technology rest in swamps of agricultural stagnation'" (Nations, ibid, p. 16).

This suggests why the rich peasant failed to become a "capitalist farmer". In the Pakistani colonial context, he exploited the poor and the middle peasants, but at the same time was also exploited by the imperial bourgeoisie and by the structure of two separate economies politically unified within a single national state. During this colonial period, the government's agricultural, trade and industrial policies re-aligned the class forces in the rural areas. The government's policies strenghtened a rich peasant class within an existing stratified society. In addition, the technology-oriented development conferred upon this rich peasant class a new political role in the rural areas. Thus we find that the rich peasant operated within the framework of a capitalist economy; but failed to become a fully-fledged "capitalist farmer". The main reason for his failure was due to the conditions of colonial imposition. The East Pakistani agrarian economy was assimilated and subordinated to Pakistan's capitalist system. In spite of an increase in commodity production (see Table 5), the formation of a large, free labour force[1] and capital circulation in the countryside,

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1. During 1951-61, the agricultural labour force in East Pakistan increased by 33.8 percent and landless labourers by 63.6 percent (Taufiq and Bose, 1968).

the relations of agricultural production were not transformed. Hence the specific nature of the "colonial mode of production" (cf Alavi) produced rich peasants within a capitalist structure.

This is the crux of the problem. In the first place, there exists a large agricultural labour force which is both free and not free because of the minimum scope for alternative employment. This is a situation where the rural wage labourer becomes in some respects a "free wage labourer" and the rich peasant increasingly turns to "capitalist" methods of farming. It is true that the rural wage labourer continues to depend upon the rich peasant, but this dependence is a contingent one. Change in the agrarian structure has produced the wage labourer. This change has altered the structure of dependence; it has, one the one hand, broken the previous relationship between the wage labourer, the sharecroppers and the rich peasant, and, on the other hand, has made the poorer and some middle peasants politically more militant. However, it must be emphasised that the development of capitalist relations in agriculture in East Pakistan was "deformed" because of its colonial status.

The main dimension to be grapsed is the developing class situation in rural Bangladesh within a specific historical social formation. Pakistani colonial imposition expanded the capitalist mode of production. This imposition was expressed through the systematic flow of

surplus from the Bangladesh peasantry to the expanding commercial and industrial community based in West Pakistan, mediated primarily by the state apparatus. The increasing extraction of surplus produced increasing inequalities in the rural areas. This extraction of surplus was assisted by the continual growth of the rural population and lack of alternative sources of employment, combined with the mounting indebtedness to the rich peasant and the trader and the rise in commodity prices. The role of the small peasants was central to this process. They lived at subsistence level, marketed an insignificant amount of their produce and existed side by side with the rich peasant economy (surplus economy) which was directly tied to the production of cash crops. The small peasants were integrated into the colonial mode of production because they supplied cheap labour and necessarily affected the overall level of wages in the colonial economy.

The structural features of the colonial mode of production have shaped the post-colonial situation. In the latter case we do not find any conflict between the "feudal landowner" and the "capitalist farmer"; rather the conflict is between the rich peasant and the small peasant. The rich peasant strategy has also increased the marketable surplus of agricultural commdoities. The application of new technology, in spite of the war of liberation, has carried forward the colonial mode of production within the framework of industrial production. Again, the deformed structure of capitalism has displaced

labour as more capital intensive methods have been used and has increased its seasonal labour demand. The rich peasants have increased expenditure on consumption and their income has multiplied. This has had an inflationary impact and has eroded the real incomes of the subordinate classes: the small peasants, the urban lower middle classes and the urban workers. This pattern of development, together with poor harvests and periodic shortages, has forced many small peasants into destitution. Their militancy has increased, not only because of rapid impoverishment but also because of their increased bargaining power. The latter is furthered by the breakdown of economic dependency, the increase in the crop area and yields and consequent increase in the seasonal demand for labour at harvest time. This conflict has aligned the rural classes structurally and has emphasized their roles within the system of dependent capitalist. Thus limited land reform and the effects of technology on agriculture, closer economic ties between rich peasants and urban investors, and the political incorporation of them into the dominant political parties have made the interests of rich peasants more clearly opposed to those of the small and poor peasants. This structural position shapes the confrontation that takes place.

6.2 Debate in the Left

Is it possible to carry through a revolution under such circumstances? During the Pakistani colonial period and also in the post-colonial situation, debate in the Left centred on this question. In the sixties, the East

Pakistan Communist Party split into several groups, basing themselves on interpretation of Mao's thought.[1] The main political platforms of the rebels were: 1. peasant-based guerrilla warfare as the central path to revolution; 2. the urban working class as the principal ally; and 3. the rejection of parliamentary procedures. According to Omvedt, who commented on the emergence of these Communist groups,

> "The Communist view, including that of both Lenin and Mao, has been that the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat of poor peasantry form the crucial militant base for any peasant organization. The rich peasants may, in certain phases when the primary contradiction is between the peasantry as a whole and a landlord class, be neutralized or partially won over to provide leadership and support, but the poor peasantry provides the most militant and numerically dominant base. When rural revolution actually develops, it is in a process of stages in which state and landlord authority is first destroyed, and only then is the destruction of the rich peasant dominance within the village is itself completed. One way of expressing this is to see the revolution as moving from a 'bourgeois democratic' phase of land reform ('land to the tiller') and the destruction of 'feudal' landlord power to a phase of genuine socialism involving the establishment of rural communes. Poor peasants, however, are seen as playing a crucial role

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1. On the debate, see Gough, 1969, 1973; Ahmed, 1973; Ali, 1975.

> in both phases, first in backing up demands in which they have a common interest with the rich peasants, then in pressing their own class demands against the rich peasant elite" (Omvedt, 1973).

It also involves the question of leadership. Hamza Alavi and Eric Wolf have argued that the "middle peasant" plays the crucial role in peasant militancy (Alavi, 1965; Wolf, 1973). Their argument is partially correct. If we contrast Bangladesh's rural revolt with that of China, we find that in Bangladesh the stage of opposition to rich peasant and state power was never completed. We find that the position of the rich peasants became strengthened by the colonial mode of production (capitalist economic hegemony) and their interests became more and more opposed to those of the poor peasants. State power was consolidated before it could be destroyed and the contradictions between the rich and the poor peasants were increasingly becoming widened before the poor peasants could grab any economic and political power. (These features I described and analysed in previous chapters). In the pre-1960 period, the Left established their rural bases on a rich peasant/ middle peasant leadership (Sen, 1969; Umar, 1972).

But in the post-1960 period, the Left tried to build an organization, taking note of the changing rural class structure, on the poor peasants, combining the double approach of mass organization and guerrilla violence (Ahmed, 1973; Ali, 1975; Talukdar, 1973). The radical Left has pursued the problem in two ways:

1. The leadership has made contact with students of peasant background. These students are from schools and colleges, reside in towns in hostels and "lodgings", and have ties in the villages. These bhadralok (gentleman)[1] students provide a large number of political cadres who make direct contact with the rural areas.

2. There has been a gradual rise in "student unrest" in the rural area itself. Here the focal points are schools and colleges located in the countryside. Students from peasant families face increasing problems of unemployment and rising tuition fees and food prices. They organize strikes, agitation, "gheraoes"; and increasingly, some of them take a prominent role in peasant organizations and demonstrations. This strategy of organizing the rural poor through the activities of the rural students has radicalised the situation. Since they are from the local terrain, the students are closer to the peasants; they are not unknown quantities like the bhadralok students from the urban areas; they and the peasants are structurally linked through blood, class affiliations and community of interests. In this way, the local students, through the organization of the underground Left, are posing political and ideological challenge to the established structure. The students come from various peasant classes, but their

1. On the concept of bhadralok, see Broomfield, 1968.

conjunctural position, impressionable minds and ideological relations shape their attitudes towards politics. The underground Left bring into their fold the militant students and poor peasants to form the leadership core. Thus the leadership is forged by an underground Left-wing group spearheaded by students and peasants on the overground, with the aim of capturing the socio-economic-political terrain.

6.3 "Agrarian Fascism"

In Chapter II, I pointed to the emergence of groups of armed youths in the rural areas. They participated in the war of liberation and did not surrender arms after the liberation. Since the state structure was disorganized and the threat to power came from the Left, they started exercising jurisdiction in the rural areas "in conjunction with formal authority". The backdrop of "agrarian fascism" resulted from the war of liberation in which both the Left and the Right took part despite their conflicting perspectives.[1] The armed youths are

1. Feroz Ahmed has aptly summed up the situation prevailing on the eve of and after the liberation:

> "'Maoists' are likely to continue building bases, training guerrillas, forming administrative infrastructure in the villages, and eliminating class enemies. The Awami League and pro-Moscow coalition, which has now excluded the 'Maoists', will have to face the reality of their presence. If an accommodation is not brought about soon enough, an independent Bangladesh will most likely be ripe for its own civil war in which Soviet and Indian arms, supplied to the coalition, may be used against the 'Maoist' peasants demanding radical restructuring of the society in place of the Awami League's parliamentary democracy and the pro-Moscow Communists' 'independent national democracy'" (1973, p.444).

aligned with Right-wing political groups. They are not bandits or outlaws. There is a close parallel between them and that of the Sicilian Mafia. According to Blok,

> "It is only in the context of the advent and impact of the State that we can understand and appropriately speak of Mafia. Bandits are in open conflict with the law and the State. Mafiosi disregard both and act in connivance with those who represent formal law, thus validating their private control of the community's private life." (Blok, 1974, pp. 94-95).

But there is a difference in the operations of the armed youths of rural Bangladesh and that of the Sicilian Mafia. The armed youths act in connivance with the central government, by-passing local authorities. Since they are part of the political structure, they act and confront politically opposing forces, though their actions are Mafia-like. Thus the political process and individual aggrandisement are combined. During the period of field work they formed the "military stratum" of the political system and they benefited from it. Politically, they were subordinate to the central authority but within the village terrain they represented an autonomous power bloc. Like Blok's Mafiosi, "In terms of actual control and authority" they constituted "a pragmatic dimension of the State" (Blok ibid p.96).

Such armed youth groups receive protection and in turn they give protection: this reflects their political orientation and fundamentally anti-peasant outlook (cf Hobsbawm, 1972). Protection involves a power

domain; and in this network the peasants are the weakest party (Wolf, 1966). Richard Cobb has demonstrated in respect to the French Revolution the close relation between antisocial elements and the French aristocrats (Cobb, 1969). A similar pattern pertains to the situation of the armed youth in Bangladesh. As Blok puts it, such groups

> "suppress peasant mobilization in two ways: first, by putting down collective peasant action through terror; and second, by carving out avenues of upward mobility which, like many other vertical bonds in this society, tended to weaken class tensions" (Blok, ibid. p.101).

In the armed gang all sections of the rural area converge, especially unemployed members of the rural rich. The better-off members provide the main leadership, their aim to consolidate power. The poor join simply to better themselves. The exercise of power is important, because of the generally disorganized structure of the state and the growing political organization among peasants. The former results from a specific socio-political situation - the liberation war and its aftermath - and the latter poses a threat to the ruling groups. In Chapter VII, I examine this process by reference to the role of one particular individual - Tobarak (see pages 238-303).

In this way armed groups become a power within a power. They control the economic and political positions in the village, dominate the marketing system, and wield influence over the important links that the village has with the encompassing society. Hence the few families

in the village who monopolize the means of production also monopolize the means of violence, as suggested by Blok (ibid. p.200). The use of violence and intimidation is part of the techniques used by the armed youth who offer protection for payment. Their punishments involve "theft, arson and destruction", they set fire to property of those unwilling to come to terms with them, they cut down trees, steal cattle and sometimes kidnap women. The rich come to terms with them through payment and heavy ransom; the other groups of peasants seek help from the Krisak Samity. So on one plane the armed youth play an autonomous role within the established structure of power, and on another, they confront the organized peasants. The Krisak Samity, infiltrated by the militant Left, provides a new point for poor peasants and landless labourers.[1] Thus a new set of politically-based relationships is emerging in the rural areas because of the predominance of violence. These relationships over-ride those of kinship. The situation is one where public law is unable to guarantee protection and kinsmen too fail in this regard. In time, as the youth gang gradually gains control of economic power, their autonomous role as a power within a power shrinks and they become structurally aligned with more established interests. Initially they dispossessed some individuals in order to accumulate land

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1. As Wolf suggests:

> "poor peasants and landless labourers are unlikely to pursue the course of rebellion, unless they are able to rely on some external power to challenge the power which constrains them" (Wolf, 1973, p290).

or capital. This accumulation process gradually aligned them with powerful individuals in the state structure. Politically, they are against the Left and they now face a challenge posed by this sector.

6.4 Mini-war : early 1972

I present in the following sections a series of incidents. Each presents dilemma and fear, but points to a situation which articulates class interest.

I discussed the emergence of agrarian fascism on the rural terrain in the preceding section. That emergence was violent; it shook the rural power base and at the same time forged cooperation amongst the peasants. It defined the pattern of relations among peasants and led to actual alignments in times of crisis. The following incidences which happened in Mirabo and Nayapara, revealed how the peasants expressed their solidarity. Tobarak Hossain, a member of the Dewan family, came back to the village just after the war of liberation.[1] Tobarak was a former student leader who participated in the war, remaining for some months in India for military training. He came back armed and with all the local boys who had joined the war. He declared that those who had not joined the war or who had left for India were dalal (collaborators) of the Pakistan army. He terrorized and insulted everyone and once imposed a heavy ransom on Majid Dewan for his alleged collaboration. Majid appealed to Boro Dewan, chairman of the Union Council and head of the Dewan lineage. Boro

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1. I will discuss his role in detail in the next chapter.

Dewan advised him to pay the ransom and to keep quiet. Time was against them now, he counselled, and Boro Dewan himself left the village with his family for a while. Tobarak Hossain seized by force three shops at the Savar bazaar, and a total of twenty-five bigha of land from various categories of peasants in Mirabo and Nayapara. Twenty bigha he confiscated from rich and middle peasants, and five bigha from two small peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara. He consolidated the land into one holding. His method of acquiring land had novelty. He forcibly took the owners of the land to the Savar Land Registry and under penalty of death compelled them to make over the title of the land in his favour.[1] He also stole cattle and sold them in the cattle markets. He forced Ali, a poor peasant, to provide him with a regular free supply of milk. (I have shown earlier that the sale of milk is one of the petty trades of the poor peasants). Village people, led by Inam Ali Bepari, secretary of the Krisak Samity, appealed to the local police; but the police declared themselves helpless when they heard the name of Tobarak Hossain. They simply said: "Sorry. We cannot do anything. He is a man of politics." Inam told everyone not to lose courage. He visited the various households, gave consolation and asked everyone to be united. In this manner, he and others tried to resist Tobarak Hossain and his gang wherever possible. Then he organized a band of folk singers. Nazu, an active member of the Samity was a good singer. The songs were composed

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1. Testimony of the clerk of the Land Registry Office.

by the underground Left and related the activities of Tobarak Hossain and his gang. One song went as follows:

"Yazid[1] has come,
He rapes women,
He grabs land.
To us both are the same:
No-one protects us.

Injustice multiplies;
Our cattle are stolen from us,
Our trees are plundered,
Our wives and daughters are
Sobbing silently.

Yazid wants us to be his slave
In our own village;
We can no longer be
Slaves of Yazid.
We are no longer afraid.

Yazid
We are not afraid of your cruelty,
If you slice our flesh
Our sons will take revenge.
Yazid
Careful
We are coming."

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1. Yazid killed the grandsons of Prophet Mohammed. In the popular idiom, he is associated with hatred and loathing.

Nazu and his band went from place to place and the songs spilled over into the bazaars, villages, cross-roads, and soon reached a threatening chorus. Hasan, Tobarak's second-in-command, was beaten up in a village for violating a woman. Then when Nazu and his band had left the village, Tobarak burnt Nazu's home and assaulted his wife. On his return, Nazu, Inam and others gheraoed (organized a sit-in) Tobarak's house. A member of the underground Left sat with a gun. Tobarak started firing. For every volley of ten shots from Tobarak, the opposing party fired one. The exchange continued in this fashion all day. Finally Tobarak ran out of ammunition and fled under cover of night; although Hasan was caught. The villagers sat in a bicher soba (mediation council). Boro Dewan and the other elders refused to take part in the soba. The decision was finally taken to put out Hasan's eyes and drive him from the village. The representative of the underground Left tried unsuccessfully to reason with them. Accordingly, Hasan's eyes were extracted and he was exiled from the village. On the next day, Tobarak returned with a gang of fifty youths, all armed with light machine guns. They surrounded the village, firing indiscriminately. In the end they caught seven "rebels", including Nazu. They burnt their homes and raped their women. They took the "prisoners" to a neighbouring village where they buried them alive in a well. They then left the area for a while. Tobarak issued a threat to anyone who associated himself with the Krisak Samity.

6.5 Bargaining strength: 1973

In previous chapters, I have shown that the agricultural labour force in Mirabo and Nayapara is composed of the landless poor, the poor peasants and the lower middle peasants. For the landless poor labouring is a year-round occupation; for the poor peasants, it is a secondary occupation; and the lower middle peasants provide seasonal labour for the harvesting only. The need for labour reaches its peak during harvesting time. A contradiction has arisen over the demandfor labour. Yields of the rich peasants have greatly increased throughout the years, while their share-cropped lands, helped by the power pumps, have also increasedin productivity. On the other hand, a large number of share-cropping tenants and full-time labourers have been displaced because of reduction in the availability of land for rental and because of the use of machinery. Thus we find a situation where the demand for full-time employment has declined but where the demand for seasonal labour has increased considerably. The structure of dependency is partly reversed. The rich peasants are becoming dependent on the casual labourers during the harvesting seasons. Previously, the renting and share-cropping system to some extent concealed unemployment in economy and provided the rationale for the kinship system. This was evident in cases where rich peasants had a large number of poor relations. The rich peasants, previously, offered them lands on a rental or share-cropping basis in order to consolidate social or political support. But in the changed circumstances the relative prices of food crops

and cash crops determine the rich peasant calculation regarding the renting of land. In place of renting out land they consider it more profitable nowadays to cultivate additional land through the hiring of wage labourers. Again, in the changed context, instead of offering land for support, they offer various economic and administrative services. They help their poor relations to obtain fertilizers, pesticides, better seeds, cash doles etc. The offer of service in place of land has restructured the pattern of dependence. On the one hand poor kin are dependent on rich peasants for services offered and, on the other, the rich peasants need seasonal labour they cultivate more land using wage labour.

During the field study, the peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara have suffered from the rise of the consumer price index. In 1973 the price per seer of rice was Taka six, whereas the daily wage was only Taka two; the landless labourers and the poor peasants therefore are worse hit by the rise in the consumer price index: generally their wages are low and days of employment few in the late monsoon season after the rice transplanting is over and in the dry season after the winter harvest. So what can they do? And how long can they remain passive?

The agricultural labourers of Mirabo and Nayapara in conjunction with the Krisak Samity have recently demanded a higher wage rate. This has been a two-stage struggle. In the first phase, the labourers were defeated. In the second phase, the rich peasants were cornered. At the time when the labourers initially voiced their demand for higher wages, the prices of agricultural produce were

increasing gradually. The rich peasants had not fully stopped access to their lands on a rental or share-cropping basis. At first the labourers were bullied and threatened with dire consequences. But this did not work. Then the rich peasants entered into a secret agreement with certain sections of the "striking" labourers - the small and lower middle peasants - promising them more land to rent or to share crop, and they also manipulated various sentiments of kinship. This policy was successful, leading to divisions among the labourers. The rich peasants, with the help of a section of the poor and middle peasants and labourers from outside the village, harvested the crop in time, thus frustrating the strategy of the militant peasants and the Krisak Samity. In the second stage, the situation was changed. Because of the sudden upswing of prices in agricultural commodities, the rich peasants stopped providing additional land to share croppers. Thus the "black sheep" among the peasants came back to the fold of the militants. In addition to this, the Krisak Samity this time organized the agricultural labourers of the neighbouring areas; and the labourers refused to harvest the ripened crop unless their demands were fulfilled. The rich peasants failed to obtain support from the peasants and from the labourers of the neighbouring villages. As an alternative, they tried to bring migratory labour from other parts of the country, but, because of fear of confrontation with local labour, the migratory labour, in the end, refused to come. As they could not browbeat the militant peasants, and as they were racing against time, the rich peasants finally submitted and

increased the daily wage rate from two to six takas per day.

6.6 Class alignment: 1974

In 1974, the government introduced modified rationing in the rural areas. Under this system, the government provided wheat for distribution. This wheat came as part of international gifts or aid; and was distributed amongst the villagers on a subsidized basis through a dealer. The Union Council was responsible for the appointment of the dealer. But, instead of distributing wheat, the dealer for Mirabo and Nayapara told the villagers he had not received any from the government; and this went on for four weeks. The village people were suspicious. They closely watched the dealer's movements and discovered twenty bags of wheat at a flour mill at Asulia. Instead of bringing the bags to the village, the dealer, in league with the "influential persons of the Union Council" had sold the wheat on the blackmarket to the mill owner, a rich peasant from Mirabo. One day the villagers "gheraoed" the dealer. They were very angry and about to beat him to death, when Boro Dewan intervened. He advised them to call a bicher soba so that the matter might be settled. Everyone agreed. Then Boro Dewan began dilatory tactics, saying he had no time, that he had certain urgent affairs to attend to in town, and so on. Krisak Samity organized the villagers and gave Boro Dewan an ultimatum: either he called the soba by a certain date or they would hand the dealer over to the police. Boro Dewan agreed and called the soba.

The dealer was a nephew of the Vice Chairman of the Union Council. It was widely rumoured at the meeting that he had given each member of the Union Council one hundred takas and one thousand takas each to the Chairman and the Vice Chairman. It was also said that he had bribed the local "loud-mouths" of the twin village. These rumours were later confirmed. Boro Dewan's brother Ramij confessed to me later that the dealer had in fact bribed the members of the Union Council including the Chairman.

At the meeting a member of the Union Council asked: "Has anyone seen the dealer steal the wheat?"
Someone said: "No, we have not seen this."
Then the member said: "If this is so, why do you accuse the dealer?"
A man from the crowd replied: "We went to his place for wheat. He said that he had not received any wheat from the government for over a month. We did not believe him. We followed him later on. He went straight to the Asulia flour mill and talked in a hushed voice with the mill owner. We discovered twenty bags of wheat there. How did they come to be there? This is the proof."
Then another member stood up. He said: "What is done is done. We belong to the same village. If outsiders come to know about this, all of us will be shamed. So let us forget the whole matter."
A landless labourer retorted: "It is true that we belong to the same village. But we do not eat from the same pot. While our pot is empty, theirs is full. Do they give us food when we are hungry?"
The second son of Peer Sarkar (a rich peasant of Nayapara)

participated at this point. He said: "We are all kin. Do we want one of our kin to go to jail?"

In response to this a poor peasant replied: "We do not deny that he is our kin. But does he look after our interests? He does not. The government gives him wheat. And he sells it on the blackmarket. And we go without food. Who is the owner of the mill? Who sells the wheat? Who buys the wheat? Why do you all support his case? Either you punish him or we hand him over to the police. We do not come here to listen to your sweet talk about hamdardi (brotherhood) or gaeti gusti (kin). When you are in trouble, you talk about hamdardi. When we are in trouble, when we go without food, you do not talk about hamdardi. All onions have the same root."

At this stage, Boro Dewan intervened. He guessed which way the wind was blowing. He said: "The dealer is guilty. He sold the wheat. He can't give it back. In place of twenty bags of wheat, he will give one hundred maunds of paddy within two days. This will be distributed among the villagers. Do you agree? If yes, we drop the idea of handing him over to the police."

Everyone agreed. Everyone said: "Two days is the limit. Otherwise we will sit in court and punish him. But before he leaves the soba, he should apologise."

The members said: "Why bring up the question of apology now? He has agreed to offer one hundred maunds of paddy. Isn't that enough?"

The village folk said: "He should apologise for his anti-social conduct. Otherwise we will not allow him to leave."

In the end the dealer apologised.

6.7 Confrontation : 1974

During the flood of 1974 the government announced relief grants to flood affected peasants. The chairman of the Union Council was asked to prepare a list of the affected persons and to submit this through the Circle Officer Development.[1] Certain parts of Mirabo and Nayapara were affected (see section 5.5). Boro Dewan, as Chairman of the Council, made arrangements to prepare the list, calling a meeting of the village people in the play ground of the Mirabo High School. I went there to attend the meeting. The people came and told their plights. The clerk of the Union Council made note of the plights and the extent of the damage. Inam, secretary of the Krisak Samity, was present with some of his associates. He spoke and demanded that the list should include only the names of the affected persons, but the Vice Chairman of the Union Council took opposite view. He said that the list should include the names of the poor peasants irrespective of flood-affect or not. It was a subtle move to divide the peasants. Inam sensed the wind. He said: 'It is a good idea. But the relief grant is not meant for this. Moreover, who is to prepare the list?'

The Vice-Chairman answered: 'The Union Council will prepare the list.' Inam retorted: 'We do not accept this. We will not know what will go on in an andhar ghor (closed room of the Union Council).'

Thunu, a member of the Samity, said: 'Yes, it is a good plan to oil an oily head.' (i.e. to pamper someone who has plenty).

Belayet, another member of the Samity, said: 'We are all

1. Officer responsible for development in the rural areas.

sonaullah (listeners) and you are all khanaullah (eaters). Eaters will prepare the list for the listeners. Oh what an idea!' Boro Dewan intervened at this stage and said: 'All right. We accept that the list will include only the names of the affected persons. The meeting is over now.' Inam said: 'No, The meeting is not over. From this meeting we give the names of the affected persons. You write down the names. Do you agree brothers?'

Everyone said: 'Yes, we agree.'

Boro Dewan said: 'You do not believe us?'

Inam said: 'It is not a question of believing you or not. There is no harm in preparing the list here, since we are all here. We know every one's plight. There will be no problem of mistatement. Brothers, are you for andhar ghor (closed room) or for khola maiden (open meadow)?

Everyone shouted: 'Khola maiden.'

In the end Boro Dewan agreed and prepared the list in the presence of all.

But it was leaked out later on that Boro Dewan submitted a different list to the Circle Officer Development. Inam went to Boro Dewan with some of his associates and asked about this.

Boro Dewan said: 'This is rumour.'

Inam said: 'Can't we see the copy of the submitted list? If the corpse is eaten by a fox, one smells it.'

Boro Dewan simply said: 'I will not show you the list. It's official. Go, do whatever you can.'

Inam then went to the Circle Officer Development with a contingent of fifty peasants. They asked him about the

list. Circle Officer Development said: 'I received a list from the Chairman. I duly forwarded it to the government. I have no idea whose names were on it.' Inam said: 'We will not leave this place if you do not tell us the details.'

They then gheraoed (organised sit-in) the Circle Officer Development's office.

The Circle Officer pleaded innocence, then shouted, then threatened dire consequences. The peasants gheraoed him for about three hours. Then the police came and chased them out.

Inam and his peasant followers came back to the village, shouting all the way: 'Brothers, be aware of the foxes. Gherao them again and again.'

6.8 Show of Force : 1974

In Chapter III, when discussing the system of social honour, I discussed Mirash Talukdar. He is a rich peasant of Nayapara. Much of his affluence, it is rumoured, comes from his connections with cattle thieves. He is widely hated, but at the same time receives grudging respect because of his wealth. The following account gives an indication of the repercussions of cattle stealing, the role of the cattle thief's protector and the mobilization of the rural groups into opposing sections.

During the rainy season, fodder becomes a problem of importance for most of the peasants. At this time, cattle stealing becomes almost a daily phenomenon. Unable to procure fodder, peasants are forced to sell their cattle; and those who are reluctant to sell somtimes find

that their cattle is stolen under cover of dark rainy nights. It is commonly acknowledged that most of the cattle dealers of various stock markets are either themselves thieves or have connections with cattle thieves. In the rainy season cattle fetch a poor price, but they are sold because of the difficulty of feeding them. Peasants tend to sell at a low price during the rainy season and to buy them back during winter at a higher price. When floods occur, the government often declares its intention of distributing draught cattle to the flood victims. This declaration of intent correspondingly affects cattle stealing. The government buys cattle from the dealers, who, the story goes, in turn steal cattle from the peasants to sell to the government. The cattle thieves are protected by influential people in the rural areas (either rich peasants, local police chiefs or political touts) in return for a certain percentage of the spoils. In some cases, those in positions of power form their own gangs to operate the cattle stealing. Such thieves are hated, and peasants, if they get the opportunity, will beat or kill them. (I discussed peasant wrath directed at cattle thieves in Chapter II). On rainy nights, poor peasants often sleep in the cattle shed (goal ghor), roping the cow or ox to themselves to guard against thieves.

Tarek, a poor peasant of Mirabo, lives almost entirely on the sale of milk from his cow. One night his cow was stolen. Next day, in tears, he saw all the murubbis (patrons) of the village, begging them to do something. Yet from everyone he got the same reply: "we do not know

who has stolen your cow. How can we do anything if we do not know who it was?" Inam, secretary of the Krisak Samity, advised him to visit all the neighbouring cattle markets. After a week, he returned to the village, reporting that he has seen his cow up for sale by a dealer. But he could not do anything. The dealer told him that he had bought the cow from a peasant two days previously and that he lived ten miles away. Furthermore, he had a signed receipt from the peasant. Tarek therefore went to seek the peasant in the village named, but discovered that he had been given a false name and address.

About a fortnight after this incident with Tarek, I heard a sudden commotion and a cry: "Goru chor, dor dor" (cattle thief, come and catch him.) I went with others to Chandu Bepari's house. With the help of his sons, he had caught two thieves, now roped to a tree. Everyone started beating them. Inam restrained them, saying: "We will hand them over to the police in the morning. Just stay on guard for the rest of the night." Everbody then asked Chandu what had happened. He replied: "After Tarek's goru churi (cattle stealing), I became alert. I started sleeping in the shed, tying the cow to myself. You know that it was drizzling. I was dozing. Suddenly I realised that someone was trying to cut the rope with a knife. I called out for my sons. They came with bamboo sticks and guarded the two doors of the shed. One of the thieves tried to stab me. But he failed. The other tried to escape. He was hit on the head and lost his balance."

In the morning, when they were about to leave for the

police station, Mirash Talukdar appeared with two murubbis of the para, appealing to them not to go to the police. Chandu asked:

"Why not?"

"They are not thieves," replied Mirash. "One of them is my distantly related kin. They came to my house in the evening and had a meal. They were on their way to Dacca to catch the train for Chittagong."

Inam intervened:

"All right. They are your relations. But why were they in the cow shed?"

Everyone laughed at this. Then one of the murubbi of the para said,

"If you think they are thieves, why not call a meeting of the bicher soba? We are still alive. We are murubbi. We will deal with them. If it is proved that they are thieves, we will punish them."

Then one of the thieves cried out faintly: "Mamujan" (uncle: actually, Fa Fa Br Wi Br So).

Mirash loudly declared: "Any insult to my relations is an insult to me. I am going to the police station to lodge a complaint against this choto loker baccha (son of a low born)."

Another murubbi tried to soothe Mirash.

"Don't get angry. We will deal with the situation."

Suddenly Inam made up his mind.

"Right. Call a meeting of bicher soba this evening. We agree."

Mirash said: "Untie them. Hand them over to me. I will bring them to the meeting."

Chandu refused. "No. They will be kept here. If you want to feed them, bring food for them. We will not untie them. We will bring them to the meeting."

Mirash then agreed. "But the meeting will be held at my house."

"No", decided Inam. "The meeting will be held at the school. We have already agreed to your unjustified demand to hold a meeting. But nothing else. If the meeting is at the school, we will come. Not otherwise."

The calling of the bicher sobha spread like wildfire throughout the two villages. Mirash, sometimes personally, sometimes through his sons, invited murubbi of the various para. He insisted on inviting all the senior members of the para, who are generally given preference according to rakter samporko (blood connection) and to ijjatban manus (man of honour). Inam on his part invited the members of the Krisak Samity of each para, telling them how Mirash Talukdar had been trying to set cattle thieves free.

"Isn't this enough proof that Mirash is involved in this gang?"

He asked them to think about the problem.

This is the way in which mobilization takes place in the village and takes the form of a public declaration of loyalties. Through the mobilization of support, a dispute between individuals is transformed into a clash of interests between opposing groups, involving the gathering of men in a show of force. This show of force is a battle of loyalties between age-old, 'traditional' blood ties and emerging class interests.

In the evening, both parties arrived at the meeting with their followers. Since Boro Dewan was away from the village on that day, Peer Sarkar was appointed to preside over the meeting. He spoke first.

"You have imposed a great responsibility on me. This is a very serious case. Only the murubbi of each para will take part in the deliberations. Mirash Talukdar, an honoured man of the village, has lodged a complaint against Chandu Bepari for illegal confinement of his attiyo (kin), who are innocent ..."

At this point, Inam interrupted.

"Two points I want to make. One: everybody here has a right to take part in the deliberations. And two: we have come here to punish cattle thieves. It has nothing to do with Mirash Talukdar. Moreover, we know everyone's relations, whether they are close (ghonistho) or distant (dur somparker). Don't we all belong to this village? Has anyone ever seen them before?"

His followers chorused:

"No, we've never seen them!"

Peer Sarkar told Inam to sit down. Inam refused and continued speaking:

"We all have doubts about Mirash Talukdar's activities. There is a rumour that he is connected with goru chor. Today proves it. And just to prove it in public, we decided to come to this meeting. He claims someone to be his relation of whom we know nothing."

Samad Bepari protested at this stage:

"Inam, you are going too far. You should apologise to Mirash for making such a far-fetched accusation."

Chandu Bepari says, "They are thieves. I caught them red-handed. Either you decide the punishment or we are leaving. We have not come here to listen to a lot of koch-kochi (bla bla)."

One of Mirash's sons rushed forward with a bamboo stick and tried to hit Chandu Bepari. Enraged, the other peasants attacked Mirash's son.

Peer Sarkar protested, "If I had known this sort of thing was going to happen, I would not have come."

Inam stood up again. "This is a meeting of all villagers. Everyone is here. I propose two things. Let this meeting ostracize (ek gore kora) Mirash Talukdar for his connection with goru chor. Let him come forward and apologize for his anti-village behaviour. And secondly, let us go down to the police station to hand over the thieves. Do you all agree?"

Someone from Mirash Talukdar's side did not agree. "Who is Inam to ostracize an honoured person like Mirash Talukdar?"

Inam calmly replied: "All right. We do not accept this meeting. We will form our own. Come on, brothers, let's go."

Inam and his followers left, taking the goru chor with them. His supporters were all young. In the meeting place, the older members of the village sat about gloomily. Mirash thundered, "I'll have a word with Boro Daroga (Head of the Police Station). How dare they call me goru chor? I will punish them."

This tactic was unsuccessful. Eventually they were taken to the police station. This meeting is a specific case in the tactical manoevres concerned with the existing balance of power in the village. It also indicates that traditional loyalties are not enough to mobilize support in a village where rivalries between persons of unequal social status gradually takes the shape of a conflict between opposing interest groups. It is not only a matter of personal defeat or victory. It is a matter of gaining power, of establishing oneself or a group in the village terrain; and the village political alignments emerge out of a specific socio-economic situation.

6.9 Clash of Ideology: 1974

In a village where the process of differentiation is becoming more visible, a clash of ideology is also gaining momentum. This clash introduces a new element into the situation. The struggle sometimes assumes political, sometimes economic, and sometimes social shape. It affects the types of action and the constitution of alliances, gradually focussing on the ideological conflict between the various classes in the village. The following incidence provides an illustration.

In Mirabo-Nayapara, there is a majar of a peer (grave of a local saint.) Every year, in early December, people from the neighbouring villages assemble at the majar and offer devotion to the saint. He is supposed to be jagrot (living) and grants favours. In this connection various local poet-singers also assemble at the grave and sing their songs. They sing, for Islam, and for the local

big-wigs, if they support the singer, materially or otherwise. It is one of the important events of the village calendar. Everyone comes: rich peasants like Boro Dewan (who is not particularly religious) and like Peer Sarkar; peasant leaders such as Inam Ali Bepari and others who think it fit to be present on the occasion. For some years, there had been grumbling about the nature of the songs. The young folk in particular did not like the monotonous devotional songs. In most cases they left silently. Sometimes they tried to protest, but their voice carried no weight. On one occasion, Boro Dewan thundered at them: "This is peer-er darga (a saint's place). This is not a place for entertainment. Those who do not want to listen can leave."

In December 1974, the inevitable clash took place. It was a cold evening. Everyone was burning twigs to keep warm. Boro Dewan and other influential people of the village were encouraging the singers. They sat on chairs, while others squatted on the ground. Ruhul Boati (local bard) is a well known singer of devotional songs. He sang with closed eyes:

"First of all I pay respect to my Baba (referring to the saint)
Our life is short,
Full of pain and agony.
Life after death is eternal.
So work hard
For gain in life after death.
If you ask me
I would suggest the ways:

Be firm in your deen (religion)
Pay homage to our Baba
Be patient
Be meek
Pay respect to honoured ones
Pay respect to elders.
If you suffer here,
You will get double
There.
These are the ways
So speak Ruhul Boati
Your servant."

When his song was over, Boro Dewan suggested another from him. Monir, a student of the school, stood up and said, "One song from Ruhul Boati is enough. We want to hear a song composed by Nazu (that one noted in Chapter 6.4)."
Boro Dewan said, "But his songs are of a different kind."
Sohrab, a young man from Nayapara, added, "There's nothing wrong with that."
Peer Sarkar complained, "This is a majar. Here we want to listen to praise of Allah and of the saint. We don't want to hear irreligious songs."
Noman, another young man of Mirabo, took his stand. "We have heard these songs for many years. We want to hear songs composed by Nazu bhai (brother)."
At this stage, Boro Dewan declared, "I am the guardian of this majar. I will not allow this to happen."

Everyone was startled to hear this. No one looked after the majar. Throughout the year, the place is desolate. In December, just before the occasion, Peer Sarkar with the

help of three or four people cleans the area.

Inam then stood up. He said, "Boro chacha (uncle) claims that majar belongs to him. We do not want to argue about the proprietorship. Let him stay here. Let others, who want to listen to Boati's song, remain here. We'll go over there!" He pointed to a pepul tree, fifty yards from the majar. "We will have our separate kobi ganer asor (folk singers' gathering.)"

He left with about fifty people, most of them young.

Jalal is a good singer. He then sang a song composed by Nazu before he met his violent death.

"I agree
Our life is short.
But this short life is
Full of pain and agony.
Mind you,
All such pains and agonies
Are man-inflicted.
Don't you know them?
They eat us
Every day, every night.
They eat our land
Our women
Our trees.
It is time
We ate them.
Let's eat them, brothers,
They are killers.
It is time
We ate them.
We are many."

In this way two separate assemblies emerged. Village people made their choice and listened to different types of song. The important aspect concerning this is that the under-privileged peasants now themselves constitute a powerful force and are beginning to act in unconventional ways, and become influential in their manner of thinking. They are beginning to feel that they are separate. This influences their behaviour (political, economic, ideological) in their dealings with other classes. If we analyse the songs, the contrasting world-images become clearer. While Ruhul Boati insists on maintaining the status quo, on accepting things as they are, Nazu's songs emphasise fundamental cleavages between the dominant and dominated sections; they unmask the protectors, brand them as killers and point to the strength of the peasantry. Boro Dewan and others like him want to continue the ideology of endurance and patience, while Inam and his associates adhere to an ideology of political resistance and wish to expose the "man of importance". Underprivileged peasants have reason to be suspicious of the kind of ideology that preaches patience when they find themselves increasingly affected by economic polarization.

Mirabo and Nayapara changed gradually. Tobarak Hossain and his youth gang acquired properties. They seldom use arms now but the threat of arms is still there. In place of indiscriminate killing, they now resort to selective killing. Their targets are first the underground Left, and then those who oppose them actively.

In retaliation the underground Left has also killed

some members of his gang. So an atmosphere of war has settled on the village. Boro Dewan has regained his lost influence and power in the established network which was threatened earlier by Tobarak Hossain and his gang. Though they are not on speaking terms (this will be elaborated in Chapter VII), a community of interest has shaped their activities and strategies. On the political plane Tobarak Hossain actively associated himself with national politics, while Boro Dewan keeps himself busy with local administration and extends his network of relationships. On the other hand, the poor peasants organized themselves in the Krisak Samity. They have learnt the usefulness of the Samity, and often boast of its activities. In times of crisis, they invent new forms and methods by which they can pursue their struggle. They now begin to talk, and speak their minds in public about their troubles and worries: the misdeeds of the rich, corruption of the administration, blackmarketing of fertilizer, seeds, food. To stand up and speak before the bicher soba, before his fellow villagers, both rich and poor, itself constitutes a break with the past. They watch everything. They scout everything. They talk about everything. Power and authority are no longer sacrosanct. According to Inam Ali Bepari, secretary of the Krisak Samity:

> "We have seen them (poor peasants) through war, flood and famine. They (the rich peasants) have their own life. Do you know how many people left the village for good? How many died? How many go hungry? They always want to use us. They think we

are like cattle. They are not like us."[1]

This, then, summarises the village situation in 1975.

6.8 Class-in-itself and class-for-itself

In this section I gather the threads of this and the previous chapter in order to focus on the formation of classes in the context of Bangladesh peasantry and to distinguish conceptually between a class in itself and a class for itself against the background of the Bangladesh peasant mobilization process.

Since there are classes and they function within 'a historically defined system of social production' (Lenin, 1971), the different places they occupy within a given mode of production define them and distinguish them from one another. The position of a class is manifested on two levels: at the level of productive forces and at the level of relations of production. At the level of the former, a class is formed by producers or non-producers. At the level of the latter, a class either controls and disposes of the means of production or is separated from it. It is through the control of the means of production that relationships of exploitation emerge:

> 'The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn,

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1. As Stinchcombe says: "The style of life of the upper class is radically different from that of the lower class. The lower class tends to develop a relatively skilled and relatively invulnerable leadership in the richer peasantry and a relatively high degree of political sensitivity in the poorer peasantry" (1961, p. 1971).

> reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers - a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity - which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence' (Marx 1967, Vol. III, 791).

Thus a mode of production is characterized variously: economic, political and ideological. All these characteristics of a mode of production in a social formation constitute the relations of exploitation. Again, in a social formation a mode of production is dominant when it regulates and subordinates the other modes of production to its own needs of reproduction.

Several important points follow from this interpretation. In the context of Bangladesh, colonialism constitutes a type of 'deformed' capitalistic development. The dominant capitalist mode of production, which operated in colonial times, deformed and modified the subordinate modes of production and reproduced them to its own requirement. And conversely, the subordinated modes of production transformed the reproduced dominant mode. Hence in Bangladesh we find various non-capitalist characteristics

both in the form of production, surplus appropriation and exploitation. These forms of production, appropriation and exploitation are located within the context of a capitalist system where they are reproduced. Thus the subordinate relations of production are part of the dominant mode of production; and, the specific form they take depends upon the development of the productive forces and upon the capitalist development of the social formation itself.[1] From this it follows the classes in the context of the Bangladesh peasantry are part of the deformed capitalist social formation. We have seen how in Chapter V various classes 'in themselves' perform their role within this mode of production and manifest their position within a structure of exploitation. We have also seen how polarization occurred as a result of the intervention of the state, the operation of market mechanisms and as a consequence of powerful natural forces. In this Chapter we examined the conditions and circumstances in which a class 'in itself' becomes a class 'for itself'. Marx in his Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte conceptually distinguished between a class 'in itself' and a class

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1. Bernardo Sorj aptly describes the situation thus: "The rural structures that are to be found in peripheral capitalism can be better understood as forms of exploitation that have developed within the framework of the capitalist system, maintaining a wide range of non-capitalist characteristics both in the form of production and surplus appropriation. Thus they are not social formations in Balibar or Poulantzas' sense - as the historical concretization of a mode of production with different survivals from other modes of production - , because we are not dealing with definite historical survivals but with a pattern of exploitation systematically generated by capitalism" (Sorj, 1976, pp 8-9).

'for itself' (Marx 1973). Only the latter denotes consciousness and capability of collective action and decision. Exploitation is not enough to make a class a genuine historical force. It is true that exploitation generates struggle and revolt, but such struggles tend to be temporary and fragmented. The specific form of the relation of exploitation shapes the 'being' of the classes (Meszaros, 1971) and their ability to organize themselves and act as such. It also shapes the forms of confrontation and the possible outcomes. Thus class consciousness is intimately linked to political organization. Dandler writes: 'a definition of peasants as a class for itself implies: (a) a consideration of their socio-economic context; (b) an evaluation of their subjective views as a product of their historical experience and embodied in a plan of action; and, (c) forms of organization, concrete expressions of class consciousness and identification of allies and enemies.' (Dandler, 1975, p.7). The relationship between class consciousness and organization presents another set of problems. Are the peasants capable of organising and leading themselves? Do they suffer from 'low classness?' (Shanin, 1971). Are they less persistent and militant than the proletariat? (Hobsbawm, 1973). The answers to these questions must depend on the specific situation. If we consider the Bangladesh case we find that the peasants are active within a broader revolutionary movement; they organize and express their objectives as a class for itself and they relate their objectives through concrete political strategies. An analysis of their organization, leadership

and ideology identifies the factors that contribute to or limit peasant class solidarity.

Organization-wise, the Krisak Samity is becoming a strategic social force and innovation. The peasants identify themselves with it and make it an instrument of power. We find that the Samity gets support from local students (who are peasants' sons) and political and armed assistance from the underground Left. The Samity operates locally and it has not yet challenged the power of the state. On the other hand, the Samity has links with the urban trade union movement, through certain inter-personal bonds.[1] The leadership of the Samity is also local. Its leader is a poor peasant. He mobilizes them in order to redress socio-economic and political injustices. He interferes on behalf of the peasants in the working of the bichar soba and thus establishes the voice of the peasants. He challenges the local institutions and questions the legitimacy of the existing power structure. He has built up a network of relationships outside the village with students and with the underground Left and the trade union movement, and at the same time within the village with the peasants. The leadership at present is busy loosening the grip of the village establishment in order to consolidate their own base. Ideological content of the peasants' demands is situation-specific. We have seen how the leaders improvise their demands and slogans in order to make explicit their feelings of exploitation and injustice. Since the leaders do not borrow slogans

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1. This will be elaborated in Chapter VII.

from outside (e.g. in the form of Left-wing ideologies), the peasants understand their methods and join in pressing their demands and they participate in the class struggle. This united stand indicates their political capacity to act as a unified force. Ideological clashes show how the peasants participate in all kinds of activities: economic, political and otherwise. The manner in which peasants live their lives is reflected through their ideology; and this ideological focus becomes indistinguishable from their lived-in experience. In a class-divided peasant society, the relation between ideology and human experience and in this case, the imaginative form which this relation takes in their songs and slogans is crucial in understanding peasant modes of action and behaviour. This Chapter shows the contrast between an ideology dominated by the ensemble of representations, values, notions and beliefs by means of which class domination is maintained (see e.g. the song of Ruhul Boati); and one expressed by the subordinated classes which, though bring the same idiom, presents other elements in opposition to those of the dominant class (e.g. the song of Nazu). Ideological disagreement, then, starts from the point of class struggle, from the concrete relations between the various classes involved.

It appears that the Bangladesh ppor peasants are beginning to operate as a class-for-itself in the marxist sense. They have found forms of organization and ideology adequate to express their demands. They are also organized in relation to an underground revolutionary movement but exhibit levels of class consciousness which are more closely

connected with their immediate situation than that of national politics. The events referred in the previous sections show how the class consciousness of poor peasants, sharecroppers and labourers is shaped by their socio-economic circumstances. Nevertheless, various ties based on kinship, hamdardi loyalties and factional politics yielded to the pressures of class conflict.

In this chapter we have examined forms of political confrontation, seen how such confrontations are inter-related and how conflicts in one area penetrate others. Such confrontation is the result of class formation in the rural areas and is rooted in the unequal access of different social classes to scarce resources. We have also seen how individuals may identify themselves as members of Krisak Samity and how they identify their interests in relation to group organized action aimed at changing the situation. This change in the position of one class produces change in the position of another interested in maintaining the status quo. In certain conditions the underprivileged peasants recognize themselves as a social class and begin to act as such on the local and then the regional plane.

In the rural areas of Bangladesh access to resources (economic and political) is, as I have shown, unequal. Confrontations emerge from this inequality of access. The underprivileged peasants have inferior access to economic power and unequal access to political status and prestige. The rich peasants largely control the means of production as well as possess power, higher prestige, better incomes, and better access to other benefits. In the next chapter I will analyse the role of three individuals in terms of

access to control of means of production and to power. I will show how an individual of the old established group comes into conflict with the underprivileged peasants, how an individual of the new power group, which has emerged in the post-liberation period, devices means to accumulate wealth and to impose control on the rural terrain; and how an individual of the underprivileged group heightens social conflict and creates forms of confrontation.

Chapter VII : Case Studies of Three Political Entrepreneurs

In previous chapters I have analysed the role of class formation in the context of the differentiation process in a peasant society. Here I concentrate on the roles of the individual in processes leading to social and political change and also on the contradictions of interests between members of the different classes that influence individual action and affect outcomes. I examine the cases of three political entrepreneurs, namely Boro Dewan, Tobarak Hossain and Inam Ali Bepari, and place them in the setting of the village.

This raises the question of what is the innovative roles of the individual and how far can he be innovatory. The innovative individual operates within an internally differentiated peasant society. This society, again, is encapsulated economically and politically by the state. (Shanin, 1971; Mintz, 1973). This internal differentiation, in part determined by the encapsulating state, plays a critical role in the evolution of the innovative individual. Since such an individual operates within the structure of internal differentiation and encapsulation, either he accepts them and tries hard to achieve maximum profits or he challenges them. All these processes have their impact on the behaviour pattern of the individual and on the groups within peasant society, and on peasant society and the outside world.

The problem of relating peasant society to the encapsulating state has produced two analytical concepts: the notion of the mediator or broker and that of patron-

client relationships. According to Wolf (1956), brokers mediate relations between the local community and the nation state. He conceived of the latter as separate levels and saw the broker engaging in transactions between these two. Swartz describes the political middleman (1968), whom he conceives of as a locally based self-conscious manipulator of resources. Like Wolf's broker, he is poised between two diverse political cultures and communities. The existence of mediating roles points then to a gap between the local community and the wider society (Pitt-Rivers, 1954; Campbell, 1964; Weingrod, 1968; Boissevain, 1973). This gap is sometimes filled by a patron (Campbell, 1964; Wolf, 1966; Weingrod, 1968; Blok, 1974), who as well as acting as mediator between levels of a society, will insist upon his clients offering support and loyalty.

An examination of patterns of 'patronage' and an analysis of the social positions of the 'patrons' and 'clients' in Bangladesh make us aware of the importance of the economic means of production and political means of control. In the concrete context of Mirabo and Nayapara villages we have seen that land is the main source of income of the village people. But lands, along with productive assets, are concentrated in the hands of Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain (along with the other rich peasants). The majority of the village people are involved in a largely subsistence-based economy. The marketing of agricultural products on local and regional level is also controlled by Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain along with the urban traders. Thus at the local as well as at

the regional level the economic relationship between Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain on the one hand, and the peasants on the other, is based on domination. Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain also control the formal legal and political institutions (in the case of Tobarak Hossain extra-legal and extra-political too). And both have political power to enforce their will on the peasants.

An analysis of the economic and political relationships of 'patron-client' ties reveals the dominating social position of the patron and the dominated social position of the client. Boro Dewan acts as a 'patron', he grants small favours to the peasant and his family, and he helps them to get cash doles in times of crises. He thinks he is a murubbi (patron) and never admits that his relationship with the poor peasants is exploitative. In his initial encounter with Inam Ali Bepari (the third political entrepreneur) he strikes a personal and affectionate tone, and stresses the ties between the two families. When Inam refuses to yield and goes on organising the Krisak Samity, Boro Dewan shuns his patronising behaviour. This shows that patronising behaviour and the 'patron-client' ties are ideological devices that are used to maintain the status quo. Behind the ties lies a structural relationship based on domination and exploitation. When the peasants under the leadership of Imam started to organize the Samity and agitate for a fair deal and justice, the patronising behaviour and patron-client ties lost their effectiveness. Both Inam and Boro Dewan organized themselves along class lines, forgetting all about village solidarity; hamdardi and gaeti-gusti. 'Patronage'

then is fundamentally an ideology of the rich peasants. Both the rich and the poor peasants subscribe to this ideology so long as class-based social and political relations do not emerge. In this way the ideology of 'patronage' masks the economic relations of production and the political relations of domination. The appearance and continuance of 'patron-client' ties is situational. If other strong class-based social and political ties appear linking people with the peasant organizations and the political parties, 'patron-client' ties tend to dissolve.

We are now in a position to outline the complex web of social relationships of the three political entrepreneurs. They act and behave within a variety of ties established in the various structures. Some ties are based on equality: horizontal alignments; others on inequality: vertical alignments. These ties are processed in various structures of social relationships: economic, political, ideological. Distribution of ownership of land and its control determines the economic structure and the pattern of alignments within it. Individuals involved in this structure behave and act in different ways. But the rationale of behaviour and action stems from the control of and access to material resources. In his relations with his share-croppers, Boro Dewan behaves in a paternalistic way. He needs the services of the share-croppers as a source of seasonal labour and also as a source of political support in the village. But this 'patron-client' relationship is opposed by Inam Ali Bepari, secretary of the Krisak Samity. He considers that

the relationship is based on the exploitation of the peasants and that it is harmful to the development of class consciousness. The third man, Tobarak Hossain, no longer stays in the village, is not interested in "patron-client" relationships, even though he belongs to the village Establishment. In the political structure, Boro Dewan has established a wide network of links with government officials; but although Boro Dewan has connections with the national power structure, he is more interested in local affairs. This emphasis has influenced his strategies. Tobarak Hossain also has direct links with the central political power. He used this association to establish his local base through using arms. The local base was then used to extend his domination in other directions. Though the behaviour patterns of Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain are different, they both manipulate a wide network of links within the existing power structure. But Inam Ali Bepari tries to change the existing alignments, and he has links with the underground Left. The clash between Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain epitomizes the rivalry between faction leaders for control of the existing resources, but the activities of Inam Ali Bepari and his Samity pose a threat to the class interests of them both. While Boro Dewan tried to contain the threat by manipulation, Tobarak Hossain nakedly used violence.

The social background of these entrepreneurs is also different. Boro Dewan usurped the land of the Hindu Zamindars in 1947, became rich and established himself on village terrain. His point of entry into the local system, it seems, did not affect anyone, since by and large, village

people accepted his legitimacy. However, the point of entry of Tobarak Hossain was very different: he returned to the village in 1971, after the war of liberation, and immediately set about dispossessing others, the people of his own village. He used violent means and althought the villagers did not accept his legitimacy they could not prevent him. This marks the difference between him and Boro Dewan, even thought they both are busy extending control over the available means of production. This has led indirectly to the existence of different and conflicting kinds of political activity in the village. One type of politics is concerned with the village Establishment; another tupe with its destruction. Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain are involved in the former process: they use external networks to extend and consolidate control over resources, and their political activities are of the factional type. Inam Ali Bepari is involved in the latter process. He also uses external networks but this time to attack the dominance of existing powerholders. His type of politics is basically class based. The two patterns are different and represent conflicting types of alignments and loyalties.

Case Studies

7.1 Boro Dewan

Boro Dewan was born in 1925. His father, Jadu Fakir, was the muscleman of the Hindu Zamindars of Kasimpur. In return for his services, the Zamindars gave him some land. He prospered, acquired more land and adopted the title of "Dewan", a position in the revenue collection

system of the pre-British period. Thus from Jadu Fakir he became Jadu Dewan, changing status from a mendicant (fakir) to an aristocrat. There is a common saying in Bangladesh: "Last year I was a jola (weaver), this year I have become a sheikh, and if next year's crops are good, I shall be a syed." This indicates that the origins of lineages and homesteads bearing specific titles are diverse. The title Dewan is historical, connected with Mughal Imperial revenue collection system and associated with ownership and control of land.

Village people discriminate among uchu-bongsho (high status lineage), madhya-bongsho (middle status lineage) and nichu-bongsho (low status lineage) families. Generally they do so on the basis of a title or lack of a title. High status titles denote wealth. But in the course of time, a wealthy family may become poor, partly because of differences in land holding in the same homestead. The homestead is the residential locus of a patrilineally extended family, though it may also include matrilateral kin or affines. The homestead is divided into individual economic segments, which may be made up of nuclear, sub-nuclear or joint families. Land rights are not based on a corporate lineage principle. Each unit is economically separate. Jadu Fakir adopted a high status title and legitimized his position by acquiring property. In the course of time, the other members of his extended family repudiated their low status title and assumed the high status title. On one plane, it is true that there is a correspondence between land ownership and relative social rank; on another plane, it is also

true that the possession of a status title does not mean anything in absolute terms. It only signifies that the system is mobile in both upward and downward directions; the accumulation of land is the basis of rank status. Boro Dewan's household is the only one now able to perform all the trappings of rank. Either because of a decline in wealth or because of failure to consolidate wealth, the others are not able to maintain the status.

Boro Dewan matriculated from Savar School and enrolled as a student of a college in Dacca city. During his second year of college, on the eve of the partition of the sub-continent of India, his father recalled him to the village. The Hindu Zamindars of Kasimpur were about to leave permanently for India. They advised Jadu Dewan to bring his son from Dacca to assume leadership in the village. Jadu Dewan acted promptly on this advice and summoned his son. Thereafter the Zamindars migrated to India, entrusting Jadu Dewan and his son to look after their landed properties. In fact, the Dewans usurped a considerable amount of these properties and then legitimized their position by recording their name with the government Land Registry Office as the owners. As few members of the Muslim community at that time were literate, Boro Dewan, who was 25 years old, became the first Muslim president of the Union Board (the bottom rung of local government). This local government office is elective and is based on universal adult franchise. Boro Dewan has held the post since 1947. Hence the combination of his education and his relationship to the Hindi Zamindars made him a leader and a man of property.

He was challenged once, just before the war of liberation, by his kinsman Niaz Dewan; but, as I described previously, although Niaz Dewan manipulated his kinship network, he failed to win election to the Union Council.

About 1947, Boro Dewan was married to a local girl. The marriage was arranged by his father. Economic considerations played a major role in the selection of the bride. Since the Dewan household was now established, the father wanted to boost its "status honour" through favourable marriage alliances. Mariam, Boro Dewan's wife, comes from a rich peasant family in Palash, a village some six miles from Mirabo. The marriage alliance aimed to strengthen the socio-economic prestige of both parties. Mariam's family is a long-standing, wealthy one in the locality. Boro Dewan's marriage into this family enhanced his prestige. And since Boro Dewan was up and coming and had become president (redesignated Chairman) of the Union Board (renamed Union Council during Ayub's regime) at an early age, Mariam's family considered the marriage as a good social connection. Boro Dewan's father-in-law lives in Palash, looking after the family property. His two brothers-in-law are settled in Dacca, and are the joint owners of a printing press. Before her marriage, Mariam stayed with her brothers in Dacca where she spent a year in a secondary school. She is literate, worldly and not very particular about the observance of purdah. As one informant put it: "Nowadays, if one's economic position is good, one does not bother about such religious niceties."

Boro Dewan established a mosque within the boundary

of his household. He appointed an Imam (priest) of the mosque, whose duties it was to lead the Namaj and to teach the children to "read" the Koran. The Imam, from Noakhali in the southern part of Bangladesh, is a lodger with Boro Dewan. As one of the exponents of the local elite, he regularly presents a frightening image of communism and its atheist orientation to the Friday and Eid congregations. He is also a part-time teacher in Mirabo High School, taking Diniyat (religious instruction). Boro Dewan established Mirabo High School during the nineteen sixties. He donated one bigha of land and paid for half of the construction costs; the other half coming from the government. The school is now financed by an annual government grant and by the tuition fees of the students. As secretary of the school, Boro Dewan is responsible for the appointment of teachers; and he sometimes also selects the students.

Boro Dewan combines in his person the twin roles of chairman of the Union Council and secretary of the school. In each role he is in a position to withhold or delay specific public services. For example, as chairman of the Union Council, he is authorised to issue certificates for passports to perform the Haj [1]; and it is reported that he has denied certificates to persons he does not like. It is true that a certificate can be obtained from Dacca if one is known to the officials. But it is not easy to gain access to State resources, especially for

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1. It is obligatory on the part of the economically-able Muslim to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his life-time.

villagers. So this specific service is the privilage of Boro Dewan, which he grants "for friendship". Likewise, he subtly debars boys of left-wing orientation from entering as students of the school; also as chairman of the Union Council he has been known to refuse income certificates to local left-wing students who need these certificates to apply for scholarships. This particular form of patronage is a reflection of ideological domination: it is not the outcome of the absence of formal institutions (cf Wolf, 1966; Weingrod, 1968), but rather the opposite. Boro Dewan uses the legal institutions of the society to maintain his position of dominance; and to a considerable extent, he controls the access to knowledge at the village level. Boro Dewan is the head of the families in the village. He exercises significant control over the means of production. "Officially", he holds one hundred bigha of land, but "unofficially", he has an extra twelve hundred bigha. The "unofficial" holdings are recorded in the Land Registry Office in various names: in the names of his brother Ramij and of his two sisters, and also in some fictitious names. Ramij is unmarried and lives with Boro Dewan. The sisters are married but their husbands are rich peasants loyal to him. The area of his farm is the largest in the neighbourhood and he has increased the level of production through the use of a tractor. During the sixties, the government announced a technology-oriented agricultural policy and offered state subsidies for fertilizers, improved seeds, insecticides and power pumps. Boro Dewan seized this opportunity to buy a tractor and took advantage of the state credit institutions

so that he might cultivate commercial crops. The normal basis for credit is the financial standing of the applicant. Boro Dewan therefore obtains credit liberally for agricultural purchases; and being influential, he is also able to defer payment of his loans year after year.

He operates his farm as an enterprise and also as an extended unit of domestic economy. His total income from agriculture is set out in Table 22 (see page 152). His farm provides produce for the market and also meets the family's basic means of existence. This is made possible because of his large holdings. As an extended domestic economy, his agricultural activities are not greatly affected by market factors. Hence he survives not only through adverse economic conditions such as floods and famine, but can even take advantage of such situations. On the other hand, as an agricultural enterprise, he depends less on family labour than on hired labourers and he regularly produces for the market.

Realising that the growth of the non-agricultural population in Bangladesh would increase the demand for agricultural products, Boro Dewan was quickly to appreciate the significance of urban-industrial development. With the capital created from agricultural activities he invested in commerce. He established a chain of shops in the local markets, managed by his brother Ramij. Ramij is a shrewd person who looks after the business competently. They deal in various merchandise: cloth, grain, spare parts for bicycles and motor cycles. Boro Dewan has a licence to import spare parts and Omaha motor bikes from Japan. This he operates with his brothers-

in-law at the urban level in Dacca and with his brother, Ramij, in the village market. His relations with his brothers-in-law and with his brother Ramij are cordial, since he depends on them heavily for his business operations.

Boro Dewan has a second brother, Tamij, who is a college student. Tamij neglects his studies, is a spend-thrift, constantly in debt and always demanding more money. Because of this Boro Dewan is strict with him, refuses to give him extra finance and scolds him in public. In defiance, Tamij sells gur and grains to outsiders in Boro Dewan's absence. He also demands a partition of the parental property. Tamij's relationship with Ramij is not cordial either. Ramij considers him the black sheep of the family. Subsequently, Tamij joined Tobarak Hossain's gang and became a feared person in the area. He seldom visits the village and if he does so, he stays with Tobarak Hossain.

Boro Dewan's relations with his brothers-in-law and his brothers need closer discussion. Boro Dewan's wife comes from a wealthy family. According to Muslim law, daughters are entitled to receive shares in the parental property, but in the rural areas they rarely claim these rights. There are two basic reasons for this: (1) sentimental affection for the brothers makes it difficult for them to enforce their legal rights, and (2) husbands think it beneath their dignity to seize in-laws property. Since in Boro Dewan's case both the families are economically well off, relations between them are those of friendship and support, and are mutually reinforced by their common business interests. Boro Dewan's relation

with his brother Ramij is cordial. Ramij has decided not to marry. He stays with Boro Dewan and looks after the business operation. Legally he has the right to his share of the parental property, but since he has no separate chula, (oven, or hearth for eating separately) he lives with Boro Dewan and helps to manage the joint property. But Boro Dewan's and Ramij's relation with their other brother Tamij is not cordial. Tamij could ask for the division of the parental property; if the elder brothers refuse to divide up the property, then the normal course would be to convene the bichar soba to resolve the matter. Tamij is a student, a spendthrift, and most of the time he stays away from the village. Since Boro Dewan dominates the bichar soba, and Ramij does not like Tamij's pattern of behaviour, Tamij's position would be weak. Alternatively, of course, he could take formal legal action, but that needs money, which he apparently does not wish to spend.

Boro Dewan is extremely aware of the Bangladesh political situation and is conscious of the pressures on him to enforce the land reform programme. He is also alert to the demands and activities of the underground Left. Nevertheless, he continues to rent out his unofficial holdings: this land is made available only to those whom he can trust. In a village steeped in misery and hunger and with an over-abundant labour force, Boro Dewan is in a privileged position as the owner of excess land. He can decree who may have access to the land and who may not. This additional land helps the share-cropper to survive, to live above the poverty line

and to stay in the village of his fore-fathers. Under normal circumstances, villagers are, it seems, reluctant to leave their ancestral home. But, for an average peasant, to stay in the village requires access to additional land which he can obtain only on a rental basis. Boro Dewan understands the situation very well; when the annual rental contracts are allocated, he decides whom to favour. "You are in distress; that is why I give this land to you." He grants a contract as if it were a "gift", and he expects an expression of gratitude in return. Again, in times of bad harvests, floods or famine, he comes forward, lending money, seeds or crops at an exorbitant rate of interest. When he makes such loans, he emphasizes to the peasant that: "In times of crisis, I come forward." Thus in this way, he is able to keep the peasant in a state of perpetual indebtedness to him and plays upon the peasant's gratitude. He is there to help, and he alone; he is a kind, paternal figure and all should be grateful to him!

This shows his general attitudes towards village life. He tends to think in terms of a hierarchy of social behaviour and etiquette. In his kachari gor , there are chairs and benches. Chairs are for the gentle folk, officials and outsiders of rank; benches are for ordinary people. When a peasant comes to see him, Boro Dewan takes his seat on a chair and invites the peasant to sit on the bench. On one occasion, when a father and son came to see him, he asked the son to sit on a chair and the father on the bench. Later I asked him why he had done this. He explained that the son, a college student, would

one day be a 'gentleman' (badralok) but that the father was a chasa (cultivator). Hence he was treating them according to their occupational status. He is also aware that the general attitudes of students towards their families, their interpersonal relations and social activities are developing along new lines. A student nowadays looks outside his family for education and employment; and peasants are more concerned with developing new types of interpersonal relations than merely acting according to already-allotted roles. Boro Dewan does not reject this trend; he wants others to come to him, to improve their status with him and through him. He is an important person and his aim is to use his role as the basis for special social status. He believes people need guidance, and that they should be subject to guidance from authority and from their elders. But those who are arrogant and defy authority should be prevented from enjoying facilities and privileges, such as school scholarships, testimonials for passports, relief, etc.

To further his own political and economic prestige, Boro Dewan pays attention to external social networks. The establishment of such networks makes available to him new sources of capital, information and power. As chairman of the Union Council, he never fails to cultivate relations with local officials such as the Thana Agricultural Officer, the Circle Officer responsible for development, or the police chief. At the same time, through his brothers-in-law in Dacca, he has become known to senior officials and leaders on the national scale. His nephew is a Dacca-based journalist. Through him, Boro

Dewan is acquainted with many other journalists working for the national press. Sometimes he invites them to attend functions organized by the village cooperative or to come to the school's annual prize-giving ceremony. This clearly pays off, since news items devoted to praising his role in the development have from time to time been given considerable publicity in the national newspapers. In the same way his association with local government officials gives benefits. He easily obtains fertilizers, improved seeds, pesticides, diesel oil, etc. The local officials treat him with respect and fear because of his close connections with urban officials and national leaders. On the other hand, he nurses his relations with the press most carefully, as sometimes he wishes to use the media to bring pressure to bear on certain local officials should they refuse or hesitate to grant him a favour.

Another of Boro Dewan's fields of activity is land speculation. I described in detail in Chapter II how Boro Dewan usurped the lands of the Hindu Zamindars in 1947. From then on, land speculation has been a regular feature of his business operations. During the war, he also bought land at a cheaper rate from the Hindus who were anxious to leave for India. These lands now form part of his "unofficial" holding. He buys cheaply, taking every advantage of the distressed condition of the peasants. These lands he then sells to urban business people, to bankers, high officials, university teachers and journalists. This helps him to establish and extend his urban network. He knows many people from many different

walks of life. This familiarity helps him greatly in gaining advantages for himself and for those he favours. Villagers naturally think of him as a man of influence with whom it is wise to be on good terms. He thus retains his hold over village power and helps others to obtain opportunities for favour and advancement.

Boro Dewan is a clever political manipulator. Though he dislikes Tobarak Hossain, initially he did not oppose his attempts to seize properties and to establish his personal authority. Instead he skilfully reduced opposition to Tobarak Hossain from the established power network - the bicher soba (mediation council) and the Union Council. He was then able to persuade Tobarak Hossain to oppose the Krisak Samity, the underground Left and the militants of the village. As he was not challenged by the village establishment, Tobarak gradually aligned himself with the rich peasants. Boro Dewan thus shifted him from the village terrain and narrowed his autonomous role of power. Tobarak was not interested in village administration. This gave additional advantage to Boro Dewan. Tobarak gradually aligned himself with urban interests; and arms form the basis of his local control. To the village people, the difference between Tobarak Hossain and Boro Dewan is crystal clear. One is a rural upstart parvenu, armed and identified with urban interests; the other is traditionally rich, a gentleman and a villager.

When Boro Dewan first heard about the formation of Krisak Samity, he expressed his desire to be its president. He said: "We should cooperate against the towns. Our

interests are different from theirs, we all belong to the village." However, this strategy did not work. He was not acceptable to the peasants of the village, who sent back the message: "We are chasa (cultivators), he is a gentleman. He is already busy with many organizations; he is the chairman of the Union Council and the secretary of the school. We will be able to manage our own affairs." Boro Dewan could sense that ultimately Krisak Samity would operate against rich peasant interests. Instead of opposing it frontally, he tried to torpedo it from within. He persuaded his trusted rentiers to become members of the Samity: these men worked closely under his guidance. When the peasants and the agricultural labourers staged their first strike for an increase in the daily wage rate, Boro Dewan used his trusted men, promised more land to the hesitant and then jeopardised the strike. He often said: "I have nothing against the Samity. But the Samity has introduced differentiation into the village, has broken the social bonds and corrupted the old form of life. We cannot be indifferent to this." He induced others such as Tobarak Hossain or the ration shop dealer to confront the Samity. If the situation became complicated, as it did during the wheat theft described earlier, he stepped in and tried to mediate. His general strategy regarding the Samity therefore is to contain it, not to destroy it, because he is aware of the politics of the day and is conscious of the gathering strength of the rural poor.

Boro Dewan tries to take advantage of every situation and to manipulate it in his favour. In 1974, the government launched a "grow more food" campaign. Students were

organized under the leadership of one particular member of the Planning Commission. They would work in the village along side the peasants to persuade them to work harder and to increase food production. The said member bought some land in Mirabo through Boro Dewan, who offered five bigha as a demonstration plot. Boro Dewan refused to take any profit from this land, but divided the crop into two parts, fifty percent going to the Mirabo High School fund and the other fifty percent to those students of the school who worked it. Everyone praised this scheme. The students, with the help of the organisers of the government-run Kasimpur Agricultural Estate, cultivated the land. The scheme became an important news item. Journalists, a television crew, radio people, senior government officials all came, took photographs, made speeches and gave encouragement to the village people. The member of the Planning Commission was overjoyed by the success. Boro Dewan was particularly mentioned in the news item. During the harvest, the crops were duly divided into two parts: one for the school and the other for the students. Again the media came, and this time the Agricultural Minister himself attended. The Minister made a speech, lauding the efforts of the students and of Boro Dewan. This ceremony concluded the "grow more food" campaign, and Boro Dewan retrieved his land. This land had actually been fallow land, which he was not using at the time. The main result of the campaign for him then was that it made fertile by the liberal use of fertilisers, land that was out of use. In addition, Boro Dewan succeeded not only in earning praise and a good name, but

also acquired funds for his school.

Boro Dewan owns a Volkswagon and a jeep. His eldest son studies in a para-military cadet college and his daughter in a school in Dacca. He wants his son to take up farming as a profession and his daughter to marry an England-returned doctor. This mirrors his desire to retain or consolidate his village power base for himself and his son. He does not want to leave the village like his brothers-in-law. Through his daughter he wants to extend his network to the urban centre and through his son he aims to retain control over the village using outside help in the form of administrative assistance and technical expertise. To him, the village binds between two segments of the rural population - the protector and his loyal dependents.

7.2 Tobarak Hossain

Tobarak Hossain, who was 25 years old in 1974, is from the Dewan family grouping. His father, a middle peasant, owns fifteen bigha of land. Tobarak, the only son, matriculated from Mirabo High School and then joined Savar College as an Intermediate student. Each of the national political parties has a student front. As a school student, Tobarak joined the Student League, the student front of the Awami League. As he could speak well, Tobarak became a student leader; thus during his college period he became the thana secretary of the Student League. In the general election of 1970, Tobarak played a leading part locally, acting on behalf of the Awami League, as the "contact" man, organiser, and agitator. The strategies of

the Awami League were based on agitation, nationalist slogans and the use of parliamentary tactics. In such politics, students are a significant factor (Ayoob, 1971). To organise the Student League and to mobilise the voters during the 1970 election, Tobarak was liberally financed by the central leadership of the party and by the individual incumbents standing for election. He became a "professional" student leader, a much feared, active youth, a prominent figure in the locality. This prominance is at the roof of the antagonism between Tobarak and Boro Dewan. Even though Boro Dewan is the institutional head, the chairman of the Union Council and the secretary of the school, the political leaders often bypass him and depend heavily on Tobarak Hossain because of his organisational capabilities and eloquence.

During the war of liberation, Tobarak fled to India together with his student compatriots. They were supplied with arms during military training in India and participated in small-scale warfare against the Pakistani army. Tobarak's parents remained in the village during the war. They were ridiculed by certain elements of the village because of Tobarak's involvement in politics: the latter argued that his activities unnecessarily endangered the family. When Tobarak came back to the village with his associates after the war, his parents told him of this mockery. Tobarak was furious. He and his associates brandished arms and denounced as dalal (collaborators) of the Pakistan army those who had ridiculed him and his parents. He declared that these "collaborators" had forfeited their right to property and to life. Meanwhile,

the Awami League formed a new government. The party leaders and their followers started seizing property (Umar, 1974). Tobarak and his associates followed suit by grabbing land and shops, which was carried out under threat of arms. In an attempt to justify such actions Tobarak would call a public meeting in the surrounding villages and explain: "We forgive everyone but the dalal. Nobody has anything to fear from us. Some of you here have been misled by the propaganda of the dalal. We want to punish them." Tobarak and his associates would then read the names of the victims from a prepared list and declare that their properties were forfeited. This list, it seems, was based more on personal animosities than on political or ideological grounds. Some individuals were able to placate Tabark and his associates by giving them land and money. But others, who protested, were executed. During this period, Boro Dewan left the village with his family for a while. The entire village and the surrounding areas were terrified.

Meanwhile Tobarak had joined a newly formed organization: the Awami Jubo League, the youth front of the Awami League. He quickly became its secretary in the Savar area; and established direct links with the central leadership, bypassing the political party's branch office at Savar. The reasons for this were twofold. Not only had Tobarak been known to the leaders before the war, but the party's branch office had also become dependent upon him for vital decisions affecting the area. The youths were activists and their help and support were needed for carrying out any sort of project.

There was another factor in the political arena: the armed threat from the underground Left. In order to combat this, the central leadership of the party depended heavily on the youth front - in this case, on Tobarak Hossain and his associates. This dependence gave Tobarak more freedom of action. The members of the left were mostly locals. So also were the youth front members. The administrative agencies such as the police and the Rakhi Bahini[1] were inadequate for dealing with such a situation, since they were not well versed in the local social networks. Hence, as locals, Tobarak and his associates could deal more effectively with the left-wing elements than could the state authorities.

Under the slogan of "fighting anti-state elements", Tobarak organised a village defence corps and imposed a tax on all households. He started collecting money and grain from each household. Eventually it became clear that in practice it was simply a get-rich scheme for himself and his close associates. Majid, a member of the Krisak Samity, protested against the imposition of the tax. One night, when the village was asleep, Tobarak and his associates went to Majid's house, took him outside and shot him dead. His wife was then abducted. For three days she was locked in a house in a neighbouring village. At night she was forced to sleep with Tobarak. Finally he handed her over to his gang mates. Some man-handled her, but others turned away in shame when they saw her crying. The woman suffered mental derangement and after her release, committed suicide. From time to time, Tobarak "arrested" peasants, sometimes their wives, and

1. A para-military force created during Sheikh Mujib's regime.

only released when high ransoms had been paid. The pretext for their arrests was always that they were in contact with the underground Left. Whether they had such connections or not made no difference. What counted was their ability to pay. Thus, under terror, extortion, taxation and corruption, the people had no protection.

The members of Tobarak Hossain's gang were made up of the unemployed sons both of the rural rich and of the rural poor, outlaws and various anti-social elements. Whereas the sons of the rural rich joined out of a thirst for adventure or from boredom with their lives, the sons of the rural poor joined up because this seemed to be the quickest road to riches. Outlaws and anti-social elements were attracted because Tobarak could offer them protection. Of course, membership was selective, dependent ultimately upon loyalty to Tobarak. The gang reflects an alliance on one level between the petit bourgeois ruling class and the landed rich and, on another level, it forged links between the landed rich and the lumpen proletariat in the rural areas (cf Fanon, 1973).

Sometimes rich peasants approached Tobarak for help over tenants' behaviour or refusal to pay loans; for a fee, he offered his services. The "rebel" elements were duly punished. Either their houses were burnt down, their cows stolen or they were severely beaten up. In this way, Tobarak gradually aligned himself with the rich peasants, those with property and money. At the village level, he was effectively opposed only by the Krisak Samity. As the normal administrative machineries were ineffective, the Krisak Samity devised its own methods of trying to

deal with Tobarak and his associates. On one occasion, the entire village was invited to the marriage ceremony of a rich peasant's son. Tobarak was there with his friends. On seeing him, the members of the Krisak Samity left without taking food. This was an insult to Tobarak. That night in fury he raided the house of one of the leaders. He forcibly took away his son, a student of a local college, and handed him over to the Rakhi Bahini as an agent of the underground Left. No-one heard anything more about the boy after this incident. Rumour had it that he was killed by the Rakhi Bahini. Tobarak threatened everyone not to join the Samity.

Under his protection, Tobarak's gang flourished. In early 1973, a peasant labourer from Nayapara ran into trouble with one of Tobarak's "second-in-command." The problem involved wages. For days the peasant had worked on the land, weeding and clearing. But he had not been receiving any payment. This gave rise to a heated argument, during which the peasant made it clear that he would discuss the issue with the Samity and the chairman of the Union Council. This enraged the "second-in-command", who took his pistol and killed his unarmed opponent. The man was arrested but after fifteen days was released due to pressure from Tobarak. Around 1974, Talim, a henchman of Tobarak's, had sexual relations with Fatima, a poor peasant's daughter. Talim refused to marry her and she became pregnant. Talim was beaten up by Fatima's brothers. Tobarak, angered by this, burnt their house down and denounced Fatima as a whore.

Tobarak used his terror tactics in the general election of 1973. Boro Dewan contested the election on behalf of the National Awami Party. His rival was an Awami League candidate. Needless to say, Tobarak supported the latter. Contrary to his behaviour during the 1970 election, on the occasion Tobarak did not canvas for the candidate. Instead, he and his associates started to intimidate Boro Dewan's supporters. In the course of the campaign, at least five political murders were committed by Tobarak's gang; and they broke up meetings supporting Boro Dewan. On polling day, people were prevented from casting their votes. Eventually the Awami League candidate won the election. The actions of Tobarak it appears was not an isolated case: he represented the "repressive character of Awami League rule" (Ali, 1975) and his activities characterized incidents typically occurring during the pre-election period (The Times, 7th February, 1973).

In December, 1973, Tobarak was married. His wife is an M.Sc. graduate in chemistry from Dacca University. Her parents live in Dacca city where her father is a school teacher. It was rumoured that at first she opposed the marriage, because Tobarak was a mere matriculate (i.e. he only had a secondary school education) and a goonda (thug). Tremendous pressure was put on her by her parents and well-wishers. It was argued that under present circumstances, education is rather irrelevant if not value-less. What matters is money! Tobarak was wealthy and would keep her in prosperity. In the end, she gave her consent. The wedding ceremony was performed in a hotel

in Dacca. From the village Tobarak invited only his parents, his friends and Boro Dewan. The latter was invited because of his social prominence. Boro Dewan accepted the invitation in order to cultivate relations with men of influence and power, since cabinet ministers, politicians and high officials graced the ceremony. After the marriage, Tobarak left the village on the grounds that he did not wish to stay there with his city-bred wife. A further reason was that his life was now under threat by the underground Left. So he built a house and established his household in Savar and rented a second hpuse in Dacca for periodic visits. From then on, his connections with the village took on a new dimension.

Tobarak's father was proud of his son and bragged of his achievements to everyone. Tobarak had rebuilt his father's homestead on a larger basis and constructed a kachari gor which they had not previously possessed. He also sank a tube well in front of the kachari gor. These features emphasize the way Tobarak was attempting to convert his new-found wealth into social status: separate kachari gor, and the possession of one tube well, etc. are the important symbols of status, as I explained earlier. Whenever he came to the village, he could now entertain visitors or friends in the kachari gor.

Unemployed youths made it a point to ask his help in obtaining work. Sometimes he agreed to find them jobs, especially in factories, and since the Chief of the Youth Front happened to be the president of many trade unions, Tobarak was his trusted friend and he therefore granted many of these requests. In this way Tobarak became an

"idol" of the young. They looked at him in wonder and envy because of his connections and achievements.

By now Tobarak was the owner of fifty bigha of land. Fifteen bigha belonged to his father; the rest Tobarak had seized by force. He consolidated twenty bigha into one plot and the rest were scattered all around the village. He did not rent out any of this land, preferring instead to cultivate it with hired labour. He then started producing various commercial crops. We was easily able to obtain fertilizer, pesticides, improved seeds and made use of the facilities of power-pump irrigation. The officials of Kasimpur Agricultural Estate were eager to assist him. His political connections made him relatively independent of institutional village leadership (Boro Dewan, etc). He had no need to go through the village leadership to approach the hub of political power; infrastructural facilities were made available to him because of his political links. He used his connections to further these ends and to consolidate his power position.

With slow determination, Tobarak branched out into various fields. There is a wholesale vegetable market near Savar. From here the wholesale dealers buy vegetables to supply the Dacca market. The dealers are all local men of little means. Flush with capital, Tobarak made a beeline for this trade, elbowing out nearly everyone by means of money or threats. The small dealers were cornered by his capital and subdued by his threat of arms. In this way he monopolised the wholesale trade.

Vegetables are perishable goods, and so the trade made him aware of the necessity for a cold storage plant.

Subsequently, he bought one at Savar. It had previously been owned by a Pakistani businessman, who had left for Pakistan during the war of liberation. The government declared it to be abandoned property and took over the ownership. However, through political manipulation, Tobarak bought the plant at a nominal price, under the pretext that it was damaged. He used the unit especially to store potatoes; but sometimes he rented it to others.

Tobarak forcibly seized two shops at Savar bazaar. He then converted them into a warehouse. Savar is an important centre for the grain trade. Tobarak appeared on the scene with the additional advantage of a warehouse. Under threat of arms, he pressurized the peasants into accepting his bargaining terms: if terms were not accepted, he could, he argued, keep his grains for an extended period in his warehouse. The owner of another warehouse, a Dacca based businessman, being afraid of Tobarak, kept a low profile. Tobarak next bought two trucks, making himself independent of others for transportation. He was now in a position to control the marketing system to a considerable extent. His weapons included arms, plus control of the warehouse and transport. Force, time and mobility were now on his side.

His political links helped him to obtain permits and licences. Being an influential contact man, urban trading groups established connections with him for permits and licences and induced him to enter into partnerships with them. He became a director of two export-import enterprises; and a construction firm made him one of their Executive Directors. The company had

acquired two hundred bigha of land near Savar to build low-cost housing. Association with this firm made Tobarak a land speculator. He now started buying land, sometimes on behalf of the firm, but sometimes for himself. Members of his gang acted as his agents in the rural areas. During the floods and famine in 1974, he purchased nearly one hundred bigha of land, then resold it to urban investors.

Gradually Tobarak has shifted from the village scene. His attachment to the village is now minimal. He controls and exploits rural wealth while residing outside the village frontier. His exercise of arms has become selective, not only because he no longer lives in the village, but also because he thrives on his past brutalities. Many of his associates work with him in his various entrepreneurial and trading activities. He has made his mark by using political and military connections. He is a new figure in the rural terrain: aggressive, confident and ruthless, a wielder of power based on the control and use of arms. Unlike Boro Dewan, he has no sentiments or attachments for the village: to him, the village exists primarily as a means for creating wealth.

7.3 Inam Ali Bepari

Inam Ali Bepari was thirty-five years old in 1974. He is the secretary of the Krisak Samity and a poor peasant of Mirabo. His father died when Inam was twenty, leaving a widow and three sons. His father had been a middle peasant, owning ten bigha of land, but was reduced to poverty due to crop failures, floods and debts. The

family had no savings and land was their only capital. At a time of crisis, Inam's father had been forced to mortgage five bighato Boro Dewan. He failed to raise enough money to redeem the mortgaged land, so at the time of his death he owned only five bigha of land.

Inam studied up to class ten at the Mirabo High School; but left in 1954 before taking his matriculation examinations in order to take charge of the parent household. His father's health was declining. The father worried about the future of the family and, in frustration, he became suddenly more devout and religious. But all ended in vain. He died suddenly. After his father's death, Inam, as the eldest son, assumed responsibility for the household and urged his two younger brothers to continue their studies. They remained at school, and in their spare time helped Inam to run the household. But it was an uphill struggle. The income from the land was meagre, merely providing a living at bare subsistence level. So the younger brothers decided to leave the land as it was insufficient to support the four of them - the three brothers and their mother. The two boys left for Tongi to work in the factories. They remained there most of the time, returning home only during the two Eid celebrations each year. They joined a trade union in Tongi and became militant. Whenever Inam went to Tongi, he stayed with his brothers and listened to their discussions on unionism. Eventually, the brothers introduced him to their leader, a militant trade unionist. In discussions I had with Inam, he told me that the leader was an activist of a left-wing underground party and that this

man had persuaded him to form an organization of the peasants. The talks with the trade union leader made Inam realize the plight of the peasants' situation. His father had died a broken man, having failed to recover his mortgaged land from Boro Dewan. Inam remembered that whenever his father had been to see Boro Dewan, he had always been politely received, invited to sit on the bench and to take nasta (tiffin). Yet Boro Dewan would decline to lower his interest rate. Despite this, Inam's father always praised Boro Dewan for his gentlemanly behaviour. He considered Boro Dewan to be a good man whom money had failed to spoil. But Inam now asked himself: if he were a good man, why had he refused to ease the interest rate? Inam also recalled the cases of the students to whom Boro Dewan had refused to give income certificates, which were essential for scholarship applications. Boro Dewan's excuse had been that these students were headstrong and were the black sheep of the area. They had refused to obey the "honoured ones" (murubbi). A further area of concern was that of government aid. In times of natural crises such as floods, the government would ask the Union Councils to prepare lists of the needy and the affected. Boro Dewan, as chairman, gave priority to his trusted men. These received more than did the others.

Boro Dewan was aware of the activities of Inam's two brothers. One day he visited Inam's bari, asked for a glass of water and sat under a jackfruit tree. He talked about many things, such as the weather, the price of paddy, the dearth of fertilizer, gur making, etc.

Then he suddenly said: "Look, the other day I went to Tongi. I heard many stories about your brothers. Your father was such a good man. You are so nice. But your brothers have become nasto (spoilt). They keep bad company. This is no good. So long as I am alive, there is no need for you to go to others for help. Treat me as your uncle. Tell you brothers not to mix with bad elements. Inam, look at that coconut tree. It is mine. But it's so far from the house. You can have the coconuts. I also heard you are thinking of forming a Samity. But do we need it? We belong to the same village. Am I not a chasi (peasant)?" Boro Dewan then asked for another glass of water, gulped it down, and went away.

Inam realised that Boro Dewan had come to see him for a specific purpose: to persuade him not to form a Samity. Boro Dewan had been affectionate towards him, but at the same time Inam could detect veiled threats. Inam was aware that Boro Dewan and his like utilised a personal and affectionate tone as a mask in order to maintain the status quo. But Inam was firm in his resolution. He was unable to forget his father's fate, nor the mortgaged land which he had been unable to reclaim. He started organising the Samity, calling for the abolition of rates of interest, for re-distribution of land and for better treatment of share-croppers. All these demands aimed to destroy the existing pattern of patronage. According to Inam: "We chasi (peasants) know why they want to be our murubbi (patrons). Boro Dewan and the rich peasants began putting pressure on the village folk not to join the Samity. They threatened

that those who joined would be deprived of additional land, of scholarships, or of loans and assistance in times of need. The rich peasants could sense that the formation of the Samity on village terrain threatened the economic relations of production and political relations of domination which for so long had been veiled under a system of patronage. The peasants under the leadership of Inam Ali retorted: "To whom else could you rent the land? Our boys are not dependent upon you. They can get income certificates from the town. You talk about loans. Do we get interest-free loans? Do we get relief from the government in times of need?"

Inam was assisted activily by his brothers and certain students of neighbouring schools and colleges in organising the Samity. His brothers often came to the village to address the villagers on their trade union activities and on the advantages to be gained by forming an organization of their own. Certain students belonging to various peasant families talked in a similar fashion to their parents and relations. Inam realised later that these students were active members of the left-wing underground party. Parents listened to their sons, relations to their kin. At last the Samity was born; some workers from Tongi led by the brothers and some students of the area attended the inaugural ceremony. Everyone present elected Inam as secretary of the association and a student volunteered to keep the records. Almost all the poor peasants, some of the middle peasants and the landless labourers joined the Samity. This shows that peasants are not always as short-sighted as Banfield (1958)

and Boissevain (1966; 1973) have suggested.

Sitting on the bank of a pond on a moonlit night, Inam told me all about the formation of the Samity. "Have you joined the underground party?" I asked. "No," he said. I got support from them whenever I need it. I depend on the chasi and the students. Students are our sons, you realise."

The Samity faced opposition on two fronts. On one side, trouble came from Tobarak Hossain and his associates. Their opposition was violent. On the other side was the establishment of the village: Boro Dewan and others. Their opposition was more subtle. When Tobarak and his gang started terrorising the village, the Samity under Inam's leadership rose to defend itself. One day the village people under Inam's leadership chased one of Tobarak's gangmates out of the village. Soon the villagers learned to cooperate with one another, to help each other in distress. Inam organized the peasants and on one occasion geraoed the house of Tobarak's second-in-command for violating a woman. They started talking about the misdeeds of Tobarak and his associates and composed songs about them. Thus the entire area became active and protested against the crude violence imposed on them by Tobarak and his gang. Inam always urged the peasants: "Do not be afraid. We are many." At night, I used to sit in his house and listen to his account of what had happened during Tobarak's reign of terror. Tobarak and his gang kidnapped peasants for ransom, stole cattle and crops, grabbed land and raped women. Inam and his Samity tried to defend the villagers by telling

them not to be afraid. But they were up against a force which had state backing and which in a sense was a product of state-formation (cf Blok, 1974).

Boro Dewan and others opposed Inam and his Samity in a more indirect fashion. They appealed to village solidarity, kinship and personal loyalty. They used the structural position of the Union Council and of the co-operatives to retain and, in certain cases, further their economic and political interests. Boro Dewan in times of flood prepared two relief lists. One list he showed publicly. But it was the second list which in fact he submitted to the government. From this list, he dropped the names of the active members of the Samity. Boro Dewan also influenced the thana-level officials not to co-operate with Inam and his Samity. Thus if Inam or any known member of the Samity approached them for insecticides or fertilisers, the officials told them: "Sorry. There is nothing left." In this way Inam and other peasants were harrassed. On another plane Boro Dewan and the other rich peasants granted small favours to certain peasants and their families, helped them to get on with the state officials, or perhaps provided recommendations for employment. This illustrates the way in which they tried to cast themselves in the roles of protector and benefactor. Inam and his Samity were constantly on the lookout for such approaches made by Boro Dewan and others. The tactic was successful in that it made peasants hesitant before taking action. Inam would point out to the people the conditions under which they lived. The peasants would agree with him,

nod their heads in approval, but nonetheless still were reluctant to do anything. Inam later organized a strike to complain against the low wages for agricultural labourers. The first stage of this strike was defeated, but in the second round, the peasants won their case. (For details on this see Chapter VI pages 244-247).

The success of the strike made the peasants conscious of the usefulness of the Samity and of the value of Inam's leadership. During the floods of 1974, the peasants under his direction caught red-handed the Union Council-appointed, wheat dealer selling on the black market wheat provided by the government for distribution amongst the village poor. Inam mobilized the peasants in the bicher soba and scored against Boro Dewan and others of the village establishment. In this battle he and the Samity became almost identical. Because of his protest and his organization of the peasants, the village establishment became more cautious in their approach; and sometimes preferred to give in so as to contain the peasants.

In the meantime, Inam married the only daughter of a widow from Nayapara. When asked about whom he invited to the wedding, he replied, "My mother-in-law is a widow. She is poor. I invited ten guests. Six were from the Samity, my two brothers and my uncle and his son. Of course, the Samity members were also my kin. But we all work together." Inam now has a two year old son. I asked him about his plans for the boy, what he wanted him to be. Inam pondered a little, then replied: "I want him to be a chasi like myself. Of course, I

will educate him. But I do not want him to be a kerani (clerk) in the town."

Inam now clearly sees the position occupied by different individuals in the village in the economic structure (in terms of land), in the political structure (in terms of power and authority), and in the ideological structure (in terms of village brotherhood). He sees in the village not real brotherhood, but opposing interests, not equality but the maintenance of inequality. The village, to him, is an arena of conflicting interests. Brotherhood solidarity through the Samity, however, is more real: through the Samity, the poor peasants organize themselves and they oppose the village establishment. Samity, then, is the focal point where both brotherhood and organizational solidarity converge.

So far I have described the careers of three political entrepreneurs and analysed their modes of operation. Here I will test Bailey's proposition concerning recruitment patterns to political groups (1963, 1969) and Bertocci's 'cyclical kulakism' (1971, 1972) in the context of the two villages and of the political entrepreneurs studied.

First I will take Bailey's discussion of recruitment patterns. According to him 'factions' are a pervasive feature of peasant political interaction. The political cleavages in peasant societies are often vertical cleavages. These run across class lines. Faction leaders are typically, landlords or rich peasants. They organize groups of followers, who are often economically dependent on them. The latter are generally the labourers, share-croppers or those indebted to them in

some way. Sometimes these clients receive loans or cash doles through their leaders. Thus the relationships between the leader (or in Bailey's terms, 'broker') and the followers are various. The principles of recruitment may be different and based on various transactions; however, some mutual interest binds them together. Bailey distinguishes between 'core' and 'following'. The 'core' represents an inner circle of allies whilst 'followers' encompasses a much wider range of supporters. The relationships of core members to the leader are generally multiplex, often involving close kinship links. While the 'core' is permanent, the 'following' is temporary and impermanent.

I now analyse factional patterns of political interaction and change and explore the significance of change in recruitment patterns to political groups.

Bailey (1969) argues that factional politics is frequently a response to development activities at village level. Such activities produce factional divisions in the village, because the 'patrons' compete with each other for resources. They need these resources in order to retain the loyalty of their followers and to maintain their leadership. But factional politics existed in the Indian sub-continent or in Bangladesh before the advent of development activities. Rather factional politics expressed the political order of peasant societies where patron-client relationships prevailed. Jajmani in Hindu caste society (Lewis, 1958; Beidelman, 1959) and Murubbi in Bangladesh peasant society are instances of this sort of relationships. In such societies resources are scarce

and static and the leaders (patrons, murubbi) compete for known resources and fight for control over resources in order to protect and organise their possession in the form of rights to the labour and service of certain groups at fixed prices. But in a changed situation (as we have seen in the case of Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain) the peasants who are already favourably placed in regard to resources attempt to consolidate their positions and establish a secure environment for capital accumulation. In this way they may forego patron-client relationships and enter into new alliances. While patron-client relationships are based on assymetrical relationships of interdependence, the new alliances as illustrated by the Bangladesh case, are based on class domination. The new alliances extend into the towns and into the centres of administration. Both Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain extend their networks into the towns and administration, and get infra-structural facilities (fertiliser, better seeds, pesticides, diesel, etc.) The other members of the village population are excluded from the main benefits of change, if not directly exploited. Boro Dewan, Tobarak Hossain and other rich peasants control the precise locus and operation of relationships of power at the micro level and develop external alliances. In this way the power of the individual rich peasant is articulated with the power of a class to which he belongs. The actual alignments, the reasons for their existense (rejection of patron-client relationships and acceptance of new alliances), identify the structural factors (initial adequate resources, environment for accumulation, scope for new productive investments, infra-

structural facilities offered by the state). All these provide us with a map of social interaction. While the underprivileged peasants organise a Krisak Samity and start questioning the legitimacy of the system, the rich peasants aligned themselves on a different plane and confront them. In both cases the political interactions are different and the kind of static situation which generates factional conflicts has given way to cleavages of class where the formation of capital and of an environment for productive investments are induced by the state.

The peasants of Mirabo and Nayapara are grouped together variously in association ranging from the 'samaj' to membership of political parties. By identifying the principles of recruitment to each group, we can pinpoint its significance and explain its formation. In the case of Samaj (see section 3.5.6) we find that the principles of recruitment are diverse, transactional but are based on single-interest relationships with the leader. The membership of the Samaj fluctuates, because the members will, if necessary, form their own Samaj.

Hence allegiance here is diverse and the grouping is loose-knit. In contrast we find that in the case of Krisak Samity alignments are based on a single principle of recruitment - ideology. Membership here is more exclusive and implies a commitment to the stated goals of the association. Hence the individual and the group interests are intimately related and the groupings are more stable. In the rural areas the emergence of such alignment is significant because it indicates changes occurring in the organizational and structural characteristics of the political process. In

the case of Krisak Sanity, groups emerge which do not entail a factional mode of interaction, but instead involve a class struggle implying the development of horizontal cleavages within the village. In this struggle the dominant mode of production is either being attacked or defended. The struggle involves a clash between those who are better placed for capitalist accumulation, and who extend their alliances into the towns and administration in order to protect themselves, and those less well-placed peasants who are organising themselves separately, demanding better deal and questioning the legitimacy of the system. It represents a shift then, in the structure of power, a situation where vertical relationships of interdependence give way to polarization and structural antagonism.

Let us now briefly discuss Bertocci's 'cyclical kulaksim' in the context of class formation. Bertocci based his theory on Chayanov's cyclical mobility among peasant families due to internal demographic features.[1] If we contrast Mirabo and Nayapara with Bertocci's field situation, we find that in our case the rich peasants

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1. Bertocci writes: '... it is unlikely that a family can maintain superior wealth over a long period of time without some difficulty ... over time, unless land is consistently accumulated, a given lineage taken collectively becomes vulnerable to the inexorable problems of agriculture in a monsoon environment, in that as its property is progressively divided into smaller and smaller shares, the size of its individual segmental holdings progressively diminishes and renders individual members of the lineage each less capable of maintaining amounts of land sufficient to ensure adequate production. Hence, overtime, unless accumulation of land is kept up, a lineage's collective wealth stands to be dissipated.' (Bertocci, 1972, p.47).

have been traditionally rich, as raiyats under the Zamindars (see pp. 31a, 31e). In his analysis, Bertocci fails to recognise the historical background, placing emphasis instead on "monsoon environment" and on inheritance. But the rich peasants are in a position to withstand crises. Rather, they take advantage of natural disaster to buy land and agricultural property from distressed, poorer peasants. This accumulation of land and wealth gives the rich peasants stability and helps them to avoid the weakening process of fragmentation of land ownership due to inheritance. We have seen in section 3.5.3 on inheritance that the average peasant inherits land but that it tends to become fragmented in subsistence-sized holdings. However, the case of the rich peasant is different. Apart from ownership of land, rich peasants have non-agricultural investments and by establishing their sons in other forms of employment, they reduce fragmentation by inheritance. They extend their alliances with the administration and urban trading groups, thus placing themselves beyond the "cyclical mobility" described by Bertocci. If we take the specific case of Boro Dewan, we find that his father was rich before he came onto the scene in Mirabo. He then consistently increases his wealth by manipulating all sorts of opportunities. This is also true, though in a lesser degree, in the case of the Sarkars. Both Boro Dewan and Tobarak Hossain have branched out into non-agricultural activities. Boro Dewan has chalked out a career for his son and daughter, and it seems likely that the newly-married Tobarak Hossain will do the same later when his children come of age. In the context of Mirabo and Nayapara, rich peasants are not a post-liberation phenomenon; they existed

prior to the liberation, but the changed situation has given them new impetus. Previously, in colonial times, the formation of capital was very slow. In addition, the distance from political power made the rich peasants' position insecure. But in the post-liberation situation, the rich peasants have become close to the national power and have become politically and economically dominant in the rural, as well as in the national, scene. The specific socio-economic and political situation shapes the accumulation process and makes the rich peasants a force, as we have seen in the case of Mirabo and Nayapara.

Finally, we find that the stabilisation of a rich peasant class and the political mobilisation of the underprivileged peasants into peasant unions has resulted in radical change in the rural areas. The expression of class solidarity at the village level is weak. In the local political arena, the members of this class compete as rival faction leaders: these conflicts of course ensure that the interests of their class as a whole are not threatened. Their political and economic dominance at the village level is reinforced by their links with the administration, dominant political parties and urban financial groups. Hence the internal economic structure of the village depends on the larger entity of the state which legitimises and enforces the class formation and shapes the pattern of political power.[1] In the case of the underprivileged peasants, class solidarity arises at the village level and undermines pre-existing loyalties and dominant ideologies. In the concluding chapter, I will dwell on this theme of class solidarity and struggle.

1. Hobsbawm, 1973, p. 14.

Chapter VIII : Conclusion

In the previous chapters I have analysed the process of capital accumulation within rural Bangladesh. This generated a process of class differentiation within the economy of small peasant producers. Market pressure, various governmental agricultural and economic policies and the nature of the state structure were all contributory factors and affected the forms of landed property and the labour system. Changes in the land-property system and in the forms of labour-power made land and labour commodities. The differentiation process that developed led to the formation of a rich peasant layer on the one hand, and a depressed layer of impoverished peasants composed of middle and poor peasants on the other. In this process, the landless peasants and the poor peasants not only became labourers, but also became consumers of foodstuffs purchased at local shops etc. Their main source of livelihood consists of wages; and, along with other peasants, they buy in the market goods which previously did not go through the market system. The latter is controlled by the rural rich and by the urban investors; and affected by governmental agricultural and economic policies.

All this has resulted in social polarization in the rural-agriculture sector of the national economy. Capital accumulation, generated by the national economy, has had a differential repercussion on agriculture: much of this capital has accumulated in the hands of the rural rich and the urban businessmen, and even the rich peasants invest

some part of their profits outside agriculture.[1] Thus capital accumulation in rural areas cannot be analysed as an isolated phenomenon, for it is an integrated part of the national economy. Capitalist development in the post-colonial period was uneven and produced two interlinked but contradictory effects in the rural areas. Firstly, it generated class differentiation within the peasantry and shaped the polarization process. Secondly, it determined the placing of the different peasant classes within the wider social structure; and defined the role of agriculture within the national economy.

The agricultural, commercial and economic policies pursued by the state, both in colonial and post-colonial periods, produced mutually interlinked and contradictory structures in the rural areas, consisting of a rich, poor and middle peasantry. All these structures are interlinked through the process of change in the system of ownership and control of the means of production and through the concentration of capital accumulation. In a peasant society like Bangladesh, where private ownership of means of production is guaranteed, the poorer peasants have little access to the means of production. As a social class it is the rich peasants who control the means of production and receive higher prestige and income. The latter are the main decision-makers in the rural areas, controlling the sources of economic and political power. However, the government is the principal agency of development.

1. Galeski pinpointed the problem sharply:
"many of the social effects of the process of capital accumulation occurring in the village - and quite often its basic effects - have repercussions not so much in the countryside as in the towns" (1975, p.115).

The state is the major owner of the means of production through nationalization of banks, insurance companies, transportation and large industries, and thus, those social groups that control political power also control an important sector of the means of production by formulating economic policies and taking decisions concerning investments, credits, purchases, duties and taxes. Seen in this light, political power is crucial in the analysis of social inequality and social conflict. Ownership of land is one form of control over the means of production in the rural areas, but that control is reinforced by control over the means of production nationally, which itself rests upon political power. Hence in the Bangladesh rural situation we find that class differentiation is shaped both by access to the means of production and by access to political power.

From this perspective, all rural development programmes and agrarian reform initiated by the government are likely to generate social conflict. The existing conflicts between the privileged and underprivileged classes shape the attitudes of the different rural classes towards these programmes and reform. In both the colonial and post-colonial periods, land reform and agricultural policies did not lead to the destruction of rural privileged groups and to the creation of a new social and political order. Rather, they helped to strengthen an expanding rich peasant category and were primarily designed to induce the growth of agricultural output needed to complement industrial development. This land reform and agricultural strategies, instead of destroying

the power-base of the rural elites, enlarged their social base and linked them with the national power structure. Economic policies initiated by the post-colonial state affected productive forces directly and influenced the other elements indirectly. At present, in Bangladesh, land, agricultural, trade and economic policies are intended to increase the existing productive means. These means in the rural areas are controlled by the rich peasants, and consequently, their position becomes more entrenched in the socio-economic and political structures. Peasants are now mainly exploited through a private property economy, which curbs the effective use of labour power, tools and draught animals, and fails to stimulate enthusiasm for work or increase peasants' cooperation and solidarity. As we have seen, frequently the rich peasants manifest an ability to subvert peasants associations, to dilute land reform policies, to reach the centre of power and to intimidate and anihilate recalcitrant peasants by heavy handed means.

While capitalism develops forces of production on a national scale in the post-colonial situation, the nation state guarantees the existing relations of production. This situation produces and intensifies uneven development and bungs together already established patterns of exploitation and modern forms of economic activity. The state in the post-colonial situation is linked to factional competition because resources are distributed unequally among the peasantry as part of the process of "intervention" or "penetration" by the state. This is illustrated by the competition that occurs within the rich peasant class.

As the state is associated with one pattern of distribution and not another, the institutions of the state generate factionalism in their allocative decisions. Thus competition within the rich peasant class and allocative decisions by the state reinforce the factional mode of operation. This link between the rich peasant class and the state institutions contributes to the strength and solidarity of the dominant classes both in the rural and urban areas. Competition among the rich peasants is another name for entering into new alliances. These are necessary to provide a secure environment for productive investments. In this way, the factional struggles of the rich peasants and the rural entrepreneurs develop into a class alliance which extends into the towns and administration. This alliance is composed of rich peasants, rural entrepreneurs and urban investors in agriculture. These, in turn, are closely aligned with the bureaucracy, the dominant political parties and with the larger urban financiers. But how far has this alliance of the dominant classes hindered the emergence of class solidarity among the poor peasants and the landless labourers? As I have demonstrated, the formation of capital in the post-colonial situation has eroded loyalties previously structured by kinship and, for example, undermined certain vertical relationships of inter-dependence. This is reflected in the growing importance of wage labour. The rapid rise in prices of agricultural commodities and the expansion of the cultivated area and improved crop yields have increased the seasonal demand for labour at harvest time. What then would be the out-

come if, for example, the poor peasants and the landless labourers demanded an increase in the wage rate? The rich peasant could do two things. Either he could use his contacts to obtain labour-displacing machines (e.g. tractors etc.) or he could activate his network to get political backing in order to confront the poor peasants and the landless labourers forcefully. On the other hand, in this situation the poor peasants and the landless labourers must also have their own organization to confront the rich peasant. Under such circumstances, therefore, we find that while the rich peasants are forced to extend alliances into the towns and administration, the poor peasants and the landless labourers are forced to form organizations to protect their interests. This highlights the objective interests of respective classes. In the one case, factional conflict among the rich peasant category turns into class alliance, and in the other, vertical interdependence gives way to class solidarity. Thus a class struggle emerges involving cleavages within the village.

We may further explore the problems of class solidarity and class conflict in relation to development programmes. The existing conflicts between the privileged and underprivileged peasants influence attitudes towards programmes of development. Different classes in the rural area will evaluate the programmes of development from their own perspectives, assessing whether the programme will strengthen their power, and enlarge their social base, or alternatively whether it will weaken the ruling group and introduce new forces onto the political terrain. These

conflicting outlooks affect class solidarity and the nature of the class struggle. In the case of the rich peasants, class solidarity at the village level is rather loose, because the members of the same class operate as faction leaders and thus their class interests are not threatened directly. They compete among themselves for control over the existing resources, but at the same time impose class domination over the rest of the peasant population. In the case of the underprivileged peasants, class solidarity is forged locally and is reinforced by their links with the Left-wing political parties, but is rather loose regionally or nationally.

In the framework of the post-colonial capitalist state, the pace of class solidarity and class struggle has depended on three factors: (a) the state of the national economy, (b) the mediating role of the political parties and the political elite, and (c) the characteristics of the specific local situation. In previous chapters I have discussed the ways in which the slow growth of capitalism has affected the social formation and shaped the class struggle. It has deformed the emergence of a national economy with an elaborate division of labour on a national scale. It has kept the class struggle fragmented and has debarred the possibility of an alliance of the poorer peasantry across regions.

Here in conclusion I will concentrate upon discussing the mediating role of the political parties and political elite and on the local situation in relation to the political economy of pre and post-colonial Bangladesh. The national elite group of the British colonial period

was composed of surplus peasants and an urban professional class. The more immediate objective of political movements during this period was to achieve national liberation from colonial domination on the one hand, and from Hindu domination on the other. For these reasons, issues relating to rural development or radical agrarian reform were never focussed sharply. The national political elite, after the partition of India in 1947, promulgated the Act of 1950 which abolished the Permanent Settlement system. This Act effectively eliminated Hindu domination as a crucial force in the society. It also set an upper ceiling on landholding at 33 acres. The historical and cumulative polarisation process intensified rural stratification. This gained momentum because of the flow of surplus extracted from rural Bangladesh and the steady expansion of a capitalist mode of production within the one-state structure of Pakistan. (This subject has been discussed in detail in Chapters I, V and VI.) In the second colonial setting, the character of political movements in Bangladesh was marked by the struggle to establish the legitimate position of the Bengalis in the politico-administrative decision-making process and to put an end to the exploitation of Bangladesh by the West Pakistani capitalists (Alavi, 1971; Jahan, 1972).

The political parties in power or in opposition in Bangladesh during the second colonial imposition seldom came face to face with the people in the rural areas or confronted the issues of social and economic development. On the other hand, no significant challenge to the leadership came from the peasants. The attitude of the Bengali

bourgeois towards the politics of Bangali nationalism was one of guarded support. They gained greatly from the politics of nationalism but at the same time were afraid of its leftward gravitation. Thus the class basis of Bengal's national movement was bourgeois. The pressures of colonial and class exploitation during the second colonial period brought about the extreme polarization between the two wings of Pakistan regionally as well as sharp polarization between rural classes nationally. From this double polarization sprang up a unique alliance between the politics of Bengali nationalism and the different classes, which culminated in liberation.

However, after the establishment of Bangladesh, the clash between the two types of politics became more pronounced. The ruling party, the Awami League, introduced the land reform limiting ownership to 33 acres (which was upgraded to 125 acres during Ayub's regime) and eliminated tax on land up to 8.3 acres. Hence the Awami League refrained from introducing fundamental structural changes in the rural areas. They opted for the status quo. A new era of patronage started. All these together produced an inflationary pressure which tended to reinforce the polarization process in the rural areas during the post-colonial period. The climax was reached in the floods and famine of 1974 with the deaths of many peasants, the alienation of many from the land and the enrichment of others (Alamgir, 1975; Yunus, 1976).

It is imperative to examine Bangladesh land legislation policies and their implications within the context of industrialization. But, more important for

our purpose, however, are the actual effects of the land legislation programme as implemented upon the agrarian structure and upon the marketed surplus.

We have seen how Sheikh Mujib's government ensured and strengthened the rich peasants by abolishing agricultural taxation and by subsidising agricultural inputs. In the post-liberation period cereal prices were six to eight times higher than pre-liberation prices, and in certain cases as I discussed earlier, they were relatively higher than the prices of some manufactured goods. All this indicates that there were favourable terms for agriculture. Though agriculture's taxable capacity was increased and the marketed surplus exhibited a definite upwards tendency, Sheikh Mujib's government was reluctant to tax agriculture, and even withdrew certain measures which faced stiff opposition from the agricultural bloc in parliament. The government at this juncture prepared its first-plan document (Planning Commission : The First Five Year Plan, 1973) which gave emphasis to rapid industrialization. This was a somewhat paradoxical situation, because the government, on the one hand, supported the rural sector, and on the other, laid a plan for all out industrialization, thus failing to exploit agriculture's taxable capacity. In this battle between rural and urban bias, during Mujib's period, rural interests gained. As rural bias operated in favour of rich peasants, it was this class that benefited from favourable terms of trade, subsidies at the expense of other social groups, and exemption from an associated set of taxes. Land legislation, government agricultural and

trade policies thus changed the agrarian structure and tilted it in favour of the rich peasants and paved the way for the development of capitalist agriculture. And with it a powerful pressure group emerged which helped the growth of agricultural output and a steady rise in marketed surplus and at the same time pressed fpr terms of trade even more favourable to agriculture.

As I have remarked already, the Awami League was founded upon an alliance between urban and Kulak interests. An important feature of this bourgeois-Kulak alliance was that bourgeois forces were less dominant, since the Kulak sought to legitimize and secure their own interests by penetrating the opposition parties as a precaution against the advent of non-Awami League ministries. This penetration had its impact on the policy formulation of the pro-Moscow Communist party (Khan, 1972) and of the JSD, National Socialist Party (Gonokontho, 1973, January 10). They all opted for the present land ceiling and gave guarded support for land distribution. In Bangladesh, where peasants constitute a majority of the population, a secure, rural power base is indispensable if constitutional politics is to be preserved. In this way, both the ruling and the opposition parties sanctioned the ascendancy of the Kulaks, and within the system the Kulaks and the bourgeoisie continued their battle for power. During Sheikh Mujib's regime, the country was living on a knife-edge. Politically, there was no open challenge to the regime. But this was achieved by an authoritarian rule so strict that opposition could come only from the liberal middle class elements alarmed by

the kind of state being created in their name. Economic policies created deeper divisions between classes and regions. These latter circumstances did not outweigh the attraction of personal affluence to most middle class citizens, who seemed to be caught up in a vortex of instant consumption untouched by efforts to turn prosperity to national advantage. The country's consumer boon was financed not by domestic production but by foreign money and aid. However, the government failed to diminish the economic and social polarization of the society; nor did it solve chronic inflation. The government began by experimenting with draconian measures to restrict wages and to encourage exports. But the measures were unsuccessful, largely because of the composition of the ruling party, the trade union and the bureaucracy. Budgets (i.e. 1974, 1975) became unbalanced, reserves depleted, and inflation ran riot, with the cost of living index rising by some 300 percent. Eventually, internal security became a problem of both economic and political importance, given the government's clear inability to control the numerous pro-government paramilitary forces (Mujibbahini, lal bahini etc) and the left-wing guerilla groups. Thus Sheikh Mujib's regime failed to incorporate the largely populist masses into a representative democracy. He could not satisfy the rural rich without losing urban middle class support and risking a military reaction. That dilemma was the background to his decision to form one-party. He presumably hoped that this would be either an opportunity for political accommodation, or at least a manoeuvre to defuse the situation. It was neither.

BAKSAL (Bangladesh Krisak Sramik Awami League) revitalised the political base, and at the same time rejected any compromise with the military. On the other hand, the government policies were enough to create military and middle class consternation. (Yunus, 1976)

The political role of military force already became the pressing issue. The country became a case study in economic stagnation, social tensions and political violence. Price inflation accelerated; wage inflation, despite controls, followed; and with these, in 1975, there was devaluation. As a result, middle class consumer society found its prosperity crumbling and its goals receding, though, a few people, including some close to the government, continued to do well. The military was reacting increasingly and made a decisive entry into politics by staging a series of coups,[1] in support of middle class interests. The new rulers are basically supporters of urban development and interests and are determined to release reserves from agriculture for industrialization. Towards that end they have withdrawn subsidies from agricultural inputs and have introduced measures to extract surplus from agriculture. These measures, as they mostly hit the poor and a section of the middle peasants, within the framework of limited land reform, are manoeuvres aimed at siphoning off capital from agricultural production for investment in urban-industrial growth and at more effectively controlling the

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1. First coup occurred on 15th August, 1975; the second on 3rd November, 1975 and the third on 7th November 1975. There was another dimension behind all these coups: India's relation with Bangladesh. But I left this dimension out because this was beyond the scope of my discussion.

powerful class of rich peasants and limiting their increasing political power.

Thus we find in post-colonial Bangladesh, in a capitalist formation, the power-elites strive to increase production by shifting the emphasis within the existing production relations. During Sheikh Mujib's period the agricultural power bloc became a contender for nation power, but in the changed context, their position has become subordinate to the urban power bloc. Though their position is subordinate now nationally, in the rural areas they are dominant. Against this domination is fragmented resistance. Although agrarian unrest is spear-headed by the different left-wing parties, the ideological differences among them are sharp and attempts to link their separate movements into one have so far been unsuccessful. This suggests, that in this context, fragmentation of the class struggle, rather than primordial loyalties (Alavi, 1973), makes the peasants sometimes passive, and indifferent. Since fragmentation results from the combination of the slow growth of the economy, the ideological differences within the Left and the localised nature of political confrontation. These factors account for the piecemeal, temporary and defensive nature of class struggles in rural Bangladesh. Nevertheless, it is true that certain new forms of consciousness are revealed by peasant action. For instance, earlier I examined certain kinds of confrontation and dispute, and looked at the means of settlement; these, to some extent, are political actions, expressing new structural alignments and contradictions and antagonisms. They are most marked in

the relations between peasants and the local agents of the state bureaucracy. Whereas the rural rich are structurally aligned with the bureaucracy and the dominant political parties, the poor peasants, organised by the Left-wing, operate mainly in the local arena. The latter attempts to challenge the existing national power structure from a class position, which, because of increasing economic differentiation and polarization, is becoming more clearly defined, and they form a local political base. In this way, the process of differentiation expands the potential area of tension and dissatisfaction, and gives shape to the forms and intensity of political confrontation at both village and national level.

GLOSSARY

Andhar ghor - "Dark room" (for secret discussions)

Ashol - Real

Attiya - Relation

Baitok - Meeting

Bari - Homestead

Bargadari - Sharecropping

Bepar - Petty trade

Bhadrolok - Gentleman

Bicher soba - Mediation council

Bigha - One third of an acre

Bongsho - Lineage

Boro chacha - Elder uncle

Boro mia - Big man; father

Boro mia bhai - Big brother

B. S. - Bengali era

Chasa/chasi - Peasant; cultivator

Chaukidar - Village police

Choto mia - Young man; son

Choto mia bhai - Younger brother

Choto loker baccha - Son of a low born

Chula - Oven

Crore - Ten millions; one hundred lakhs

Dak - Not original; so-called

Dalal - Collaborator

Diniyat - Religious instruction

Dur somperker attiyo - Distant relations

Eid - twice yearly religious festival

Ek ghore kora - Ostracise

Fakir - Mendicant

Gaeti gusti - Kin

Gherao - Organised sit-in

Ghonisto attiyo - Near relation

Ghor - House

Ghor jamai - Son-in-law of the house

Goal ghor - Cattle shed

Goonda - Thug

Goru chor - Cattle thief

Gur - Treacle

Hamdardi - Brotherhood

Haj - Annual pilgrimage to Mecca, obligatory at least once for all economically-capable Muslims

Hat - Bazaar

Ijjatban manus - Honoured person

Imam - Person leading the prayers

Jagrot - Living

Jola - Weaver

Jo - Right time

Kachari ghor - Separate place in a house for entertaining visitors and guests

Kamla - Day labourer

Khana - Meal

Khanaullah - Eater

Kharop obostha - Bad condition

Khola maiden -"Open meadow" (open discussions)

Kobi ganer asor - Folk singers' assembly

Krisak samity - Peasant association

Lajja - Shame

Lakh - One hundred thousand

Lal bahini - Paramilitary force affiliated to Awami League's Labour front

Langer knana - Gruel kitchen

Latial - Muscle-man

Madhya-bongsho - Middle lineage

Majar - Grave of an important person

Maldar - Wealthy

Matabbar - Headman

Maund - 82.28 lbs.

Mia - Honorific title of a rich person

Mohr - Dowry

Moulanas - Religious scholars

Mujib bahini - Paramilitary force affiliated to Awami League's student front

Mukti Bahini - Freedom fighters

Murubbi - Patron

Namaj - Prayers

Nasta - Tiffin

Nichu-bonsho - Low lineage

Nasto - Spoilt

Obostha - Condition

Othabosha - Hobnobbing

Para - Neighbourhood

Peer - Saint

Peer-er-darga - Shrine of a saint

Pub - East

Pukur - Pond

Purdah - Veil

Raiyat - Tenant

Rakhi bahini - Paramilitary forc created during Mujib's regime

Rakter somporko - Blood connection

Samaj - Little community

Sangram samitis - Struggle committees

Sonaullah - Listener

Taka - Bangladesh currency; in 1974-75, 30 taka equalled £1 (stg)

Tehsil - Revenue unit

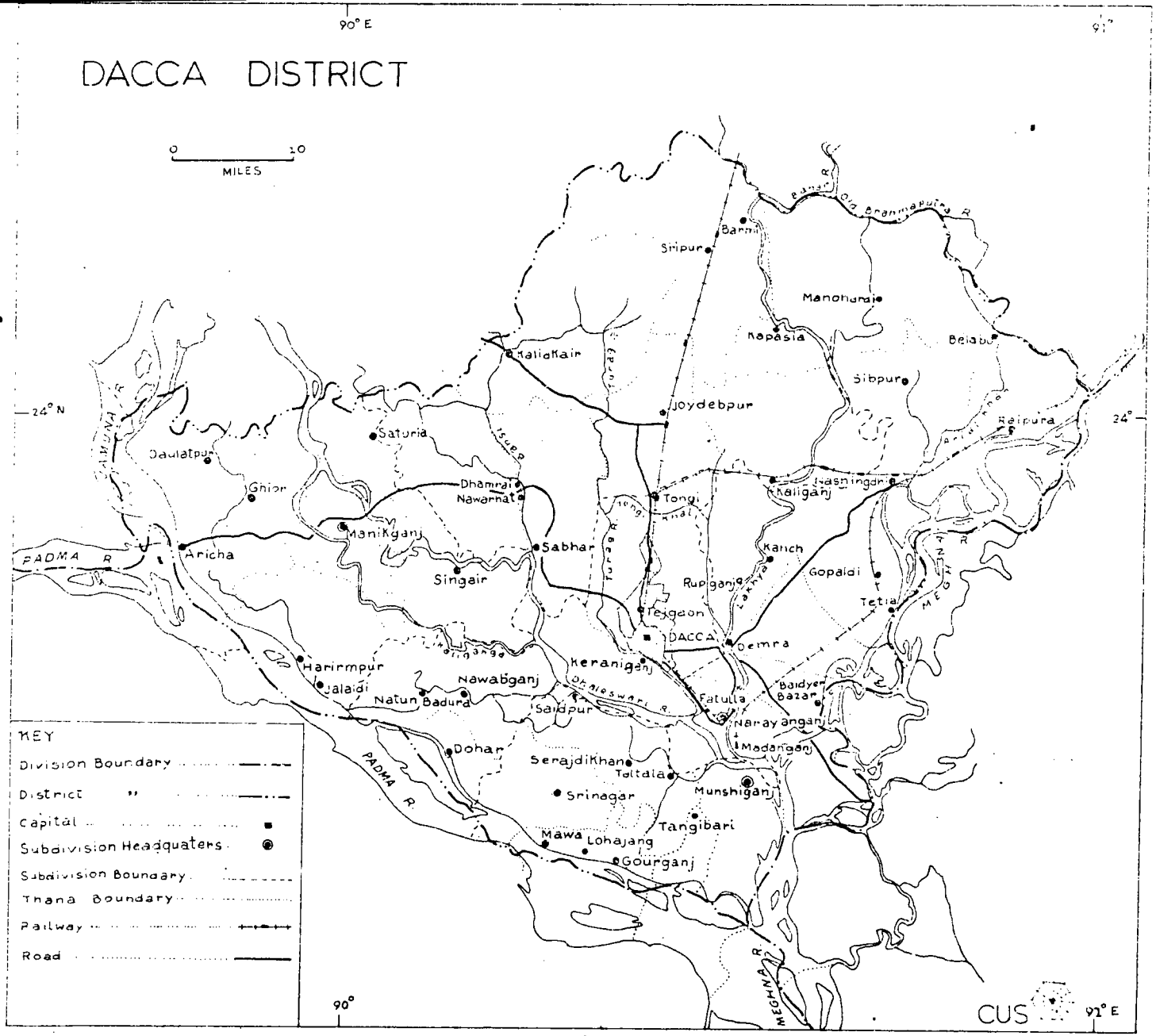
Thana - Administrative unit, equivalent to county in U.S.A.

Ucho-bongsho- High lineage

Uttor - North

Vera - Sheep

Zamindar - Landlord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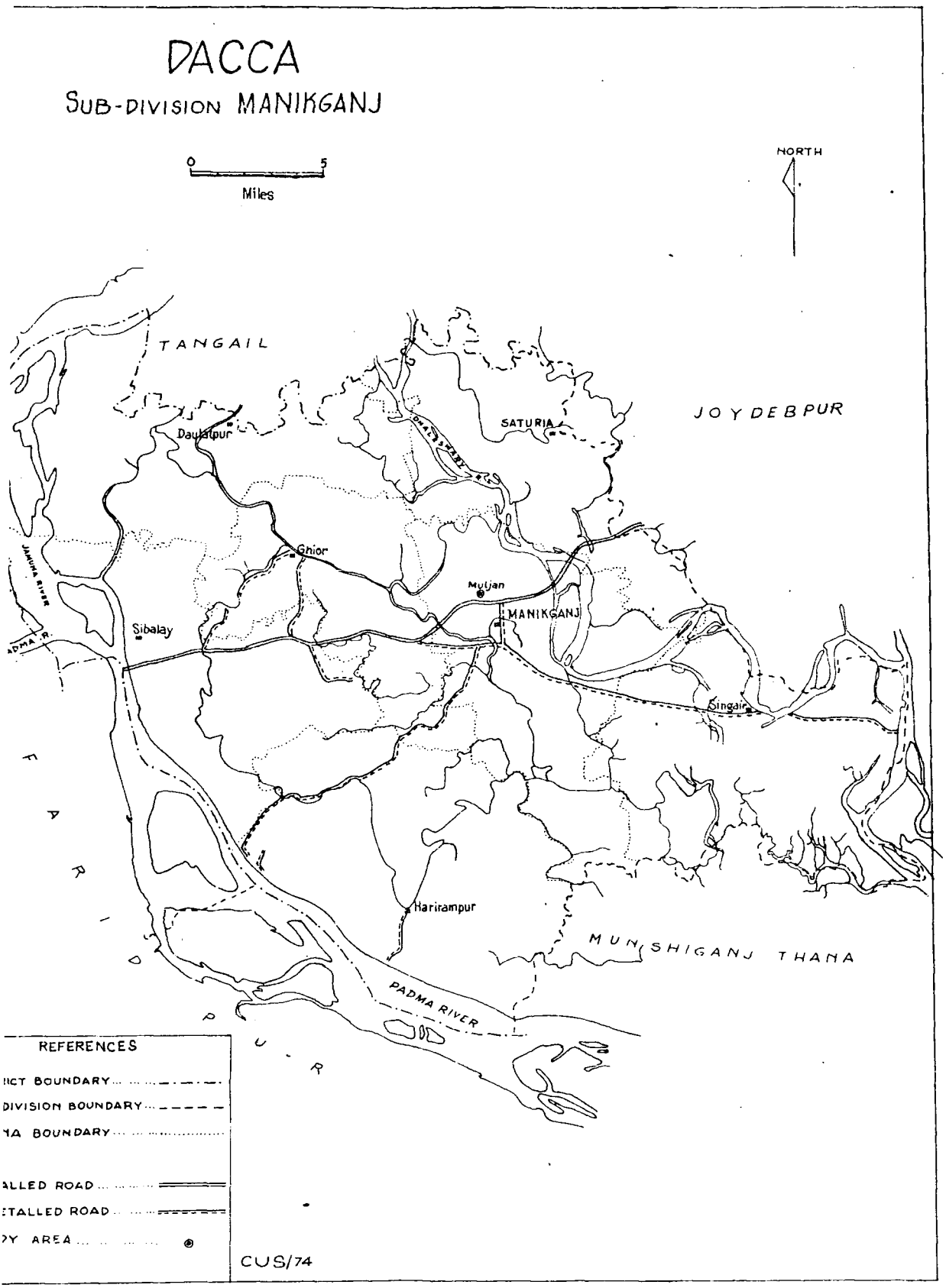

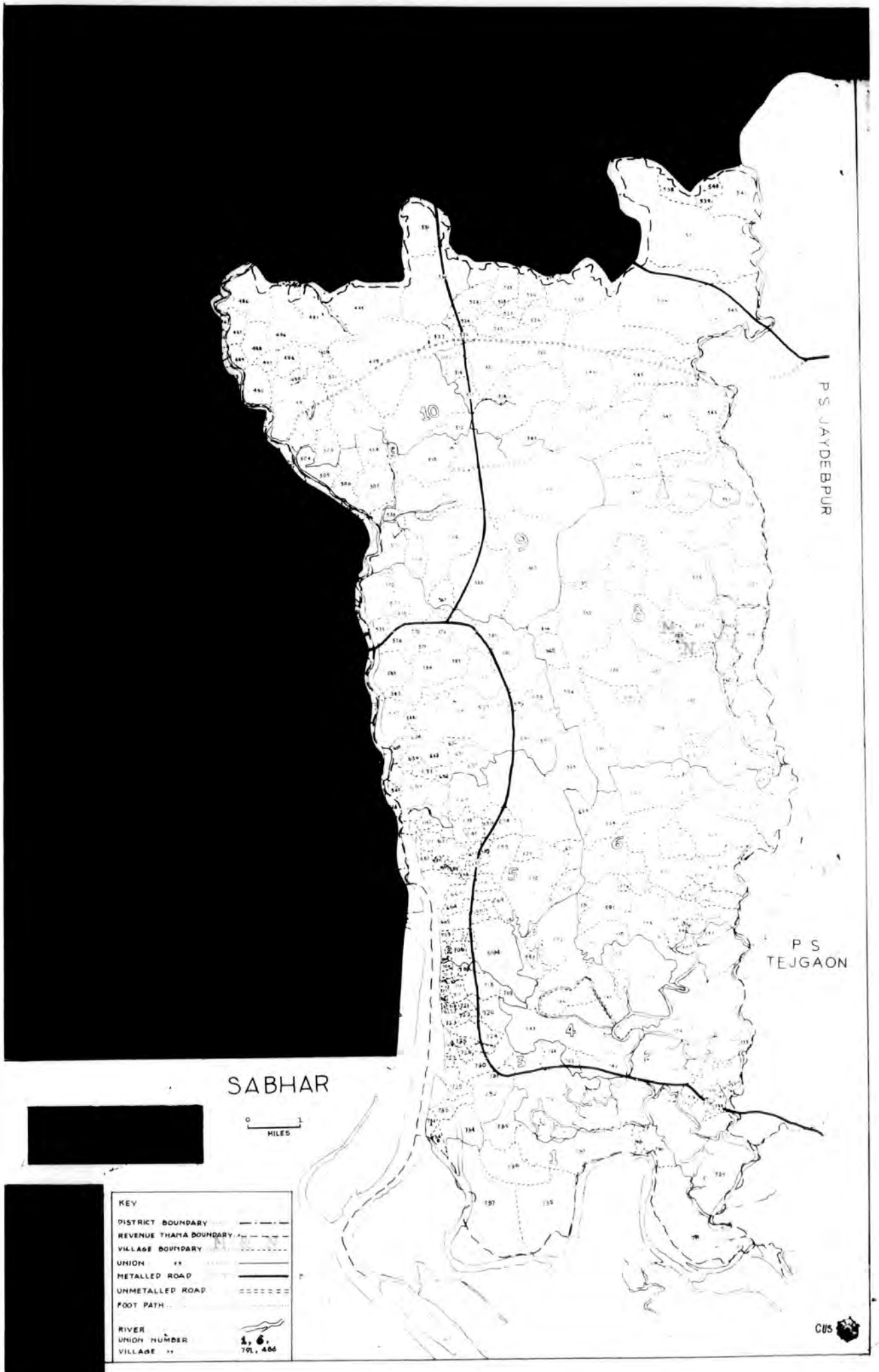
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